TALE OF 2 TANS

SAY IT AIN'T SO Perennial Pinoy presidential candidate Joseph Estrada wants rival Manuel Villar to explain the alleged irregular transactions at the Philippine Stock Exchange. REPORTS

Samar gov's House bid stopped ACROSS / A17

CA bars taipan's daughter from running METRO / A23

NEWS / A3

Probe of Russian plane crash in Pampanga is on

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Friday, April 23, 2010 ++ Vol. 35 | No. 114

Gordon sues survey firms, seeks damages

By Julie M. Aurelio and Inquirer Research

CLAIMING THE METHODS THEY WERE using were "flawed and inaccurate," Sen. Richard Gordon yesterday sued two polling firms for damages and asked a court to stop them from conducting and publishing pre-election surveys.

GORDON A20

Villar: Trouble with hellos

SEC bares NP bet used influence to twist stock market rules

By Gerry Lirio

(first of two parts)

HELLO FE! HELLO FRANCIS!

Sen. Manny Villar called Fe Barin, chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and Francis Lim, then president of the Philippine Stock Exchange, many times sometime between May and June 2007, the Inquirer has learned.

But the calls, according to SEC and PSE lawyers and brokers interviewed by the Inquirer on separate occasions, were "too many to be easily dismissed and forgotten."

They couldn't forget about the calls either, they said, most especially because Villar, then Senate President, wanted the SEC and PSE officials "to throw the exchange rules out the window."

Villar was seeking the release from escrow of about 1.2 billion of the 3.1 billion secondary shares of Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc. in June 2007 so these could be offered both as primary and secondary shares at the same time, or several days apart.

The Senate President not only made the calls, he also appeared before SEC and PSE board meetings, the lawyers said.

Villar and his wife Cynthia, the Las Piñas representative, are majority stockholders of Vista Land, the couple's flagship company.

The couple became P6.75 billion richer from the secondary offering of 983.9 million shares that began on July 26, 2007, or

VILLAR'S A10

HAVE A BLAST NP standard-bearer Manuel Villar arrives on a blast of trombones by the Lobo Youth Ambassador Band during his visit on Wednesday to Tagbilaran City, where he presided over the oath-taking of "defectors" in Bohol led by Gov. Erico Aumentado of the Nacionalista Party.

Erap, JPE accuse Manny of pressuring PSE on stock sale

By Norman Bordadora

SEN. MANUEL VILLAR, Nacionalista Party standard-bearer, outmaneuvered for his presidential campaign P5 billion which he raised from an allegedly irregular transaction three years ago involving his real estate firm's shares, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile said yesterday.

The P5 billion came from the P26 billion that the family-controlled Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc. (the corporate successor of real estate developer C&P Homes Inc.) raised in the stock market, said Enrile, senatorial candidate of the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP).

Enrile accused Villar of influencing the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) board in June 2007 into approving his request to release almost 30 percent of his shares in Vista Land from

ERAP A10

'Vista Land should answer issue, not me'

By Michael Lim Ubac

BACOLOD CITY—NACIONALista Party standard-bearer Manuel Villar yesterday chose to ignore yet another attack hurled by a rival, this time involving his shares in property firm Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc.

Noting that the allegations were raised by the camp of deposed President Joseph Estrada, another presidential candidate, Villar said: "I will not answer him on this issue, and I will leave this to the company to answer. Anyway, this is a private issue and should be answered appropriately by the company."

However, he made it clear at a press conference here that the sale of his shares was above-board. "It's clear that I am not doing anything wrong, and this is just politicking," he said.

Instead of discussing the is-

VISTA A10

Noynoy warns: I'll void 'midnight' appointments, deals

By Philip C. Tubeza

LIBERAL PARTY STANDARD-bearer Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III yesterday warned foreign governments and suppliers against entering into "midnight contracts" with the outgoing Arroyo administration.

Without giving specifics, the LP senator alleged that guidelines, "supplier-driven" deals involving the Armed Forces modernization program were "being rushed even as we speak."

He also denounced the "midnight appointments" of administration favorites in the defense establishment.

In a wide-ranging speech at the Manila Oriental in Makati, Aquino said any "midnight deal" with the administration would be scrapped if proven to be disadvantageous to the government.

"We call upon suppliers and representatives of foreign governments to refrain from entering into 11th-hour contracts with this outgoing administration," he said.

"If such midnight deals are concluded just the same, they

NOYNOY A11

CENTENNIAL WOMAN President Arroyo confers the Lakandula Award with the rank of Bayani on renowned pioneering pediatrician Dr. Fe del Mundo in Malacañang this Thursday. Del Mundo, born on Nov. 27, 1911, is possibly the first woman and Filipino admitted to the Harvard Medical School after graduating valedictorian from UP College of Medicine. Her work in pediatrics has spanned eight decades.

Why Chiz all the way for Jojo not Mar: 'Kulang sa kalyo'

By Cathy Yamsuan

"KULANG SA KALYO," SEN. FRANCIS "Chiz" Escudero-son of Sen. Mel Rosas.

In plain talk, Rosas is a spring chicken, rather than a fighting cock.

That's why, Escudero said in a television interview yesterday, he had decided to support Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, running mate of ex-President Joseph Estrada.

Binay fits Escudero's idea of a vice president.

"Not someone rich, not an 'ilustrado,' one who is courageous, a man of honor and a genuine member of the opposition," he told APEC's Karen Davila.

Asked if his support for Binay was aimed at thwarting Roxas' anticipated run for the presidency in 2016, the 40-year-old Escudero said, "I am nonvigilant."

"Why should I be making enemies this early? It's not in my interest to draw the line this early if indeed that is on my mind," he said.

Besides, Escudero said, the Aquino-Binay tandem would provide a better balance of governance. "One is from the legislature, while the other is an executive official."

"Everyone says Noynoy comes from a

MAP CHIZ A10

Jail warden sacked, or was he promoted?

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Miko Morales

WAS HE PUNISHED OR PROMOTED? The jail officer who allowed Aniel Amaaban Jr., the prime suspect in the

JAIL A21

Agra breaks into tears but still sticks to order

By Mike Morales, Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Christian V. Esguerra

HE ADMITS HE'S A CRYBABY

Acting Justice Secretary Alberto Agra, in the eye of a storm over his decision to clear two members of the powerful Ampatuan clan of murder charges in what has come to be known as the Maguindanao Massacre, was in tears yesterday as he spoke about the public criticism that was hurting him and his family.

But he's still sticking to his decision.

Agra also took pains to clarify that the Palace directive on a review of the case of Zaldy and Akmad Ampatuan only meant a closer scrutiny of case records since private prosecution had filed a motion for reconsideration.

Speaking before employees of the Bureau of Corrections at the national penitentiary, where he signed the new rules on parole, Agra said he was sorry that he was "on the verge of crying."

"I was brought up to be a crybaby by my father, and I am just being true to myself," he said in Filipino.

AGRA A11

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Isolated Rainshowers
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Showers
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Thunderstorms
Puerto Princesa	Partly Cloudy	Rain Showers
Tacloban City	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Iloilo City	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Cebu City	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Zamboanga City	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Davao	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy
Cotabato City	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy

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1931
720
1614

SUERTRES
0 3 7
8 4 1
9 9 9

6/42 LOTTO
5 8 4 7 0 1

6/45 LUZ-VIS-MIN
4 13 15 20 34 42
P28,656,657.00

SUPER LOTTO 6/49
2 13 15 22 27 48
P31,106,240.00

GMA can't name Sandigan chief

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

WHILE THE SUPREME COURT GAVE HER THE green light to appoint the next Chief Justice, President Macapagal-Arroyo cannot name a new Sandiganbayan presiding justice or fill up other vacancies in the judiciary outside of the high court.

This is the prevailing view of the high court that recently ruled that the constitutional ban against presidential midnight appointments encloses vacancies in the Supreme Court, according to court administrator and spokesperson Midas Marquez.

"The exemption from the ban applies only to vacancies in the Supreme Court. President Arroyo cannot fill up vacancies in the Sandiganbayan, trial courts and other positions in the judiciary," Marquez said.

Ms Arroyo is therefore barred from appointing a successor to the late Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice Norberto Geraldez who died of cancer last April 4.

Misreading earlier tolerated **that the President wanted to appoint** a replacement for Geraldez.

In a March 17 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the President was allowed to appoint the successor to Chief Justice Reynato Puno who retires on May 17, even though it would fall within the period of the constitutional ban against making appointments two months before an election and until the end of her term.

The midnight appointments ban took effect last March 10, or one months before the May 10 elections.

Last Tuesday, with the same 9 to 5 vote, the high court lifted its closed voting motions asking it reconsider its March 17 ruling.

But it did not reverse a 1998 decision nullifying the appointment by then outgoing President Fidel Ramos of two trial court judges.

The 1998 decision said that the President was neither required nor allowed to make appointments in the months during the two months before the next presidential elections and up to the end of his term, **under Section 15 Article VII of the Constitution.**

The March 17 decision said that calls exempted vacancies in the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the Alternative Law Groups (ALG), a coalition of 20 nongovernment organizations, denounced the March 17 decision saying the Supreme Court had misinterpreted the constitutional provision against midnight appointments.

In a statement, the ALG said the Supreme Court "failed to guard the independence of the judiciary."

"There is no justification for the Supreme Court to invalidate the **prohibition against midnight appointments with respect to positions in the Supreme Court," it said.**

OUTRAGE OF VICTIMS
Relatives of the victims of the Maguindanao massacre light candles at the facade of the Department of Justice to protest the decision of Acting Justice Secretary Alberto Agra to remanding two members of the Ampatuan family from the charge sheet purportedly because there was no evidence against them. Agra's decision has triggered outrage from various sectors who have called for his removal and his detachment.

PHILIPPINE JUDGES ASSOCIATION

MANIFESTO OF SUPPORT TO HONORABLE MA. THERESA L. DE LA TORRE-YADAO RTC, BRANCH 81, QUEZON CITY

WHEREAS, the Department of Justice promulgated a Resolution on March 1, 2010 against Hon. Presiding Judge Ma. Theresa L. de La Torre-Yadao, Regional Trial Court, Branch 81, Quezon City, the dispositive portion of which reads as follows:

> "WHEREFORE, premises considered, the assailed resolutions of State Prosecutor Juan Pedro C. Navera, as Acting City Prosecutor of Quezon City, dated September 17, 2009 and February 17, 2010 are hereby REVERSED and SET ASIDE. The Chief State Prosecutor or the City Prosecutor of Quezon City is hereby directed to file an information against respondent for violation of Article 204 of the Revised Penal Code, and to report the action taken thereon within ten (10) days from receipt hereof.
>
> Xxx xxx xxx

WHEREAS, the chronological events that led to the issuance of the aforementioned Resolution are as follows:

(1) Judge Yadao, after trial convicted Representative Jose Villarosa of two (2) counts of Murder in Criminal Cases Nos. Q-98-75633 and Q-98-75634 in a Decision promulgated on February 3, 2006.

(2) Upon appeal, the Court of Appeals acquitted Villarosa and thereafter, said accused filed a criminal complaint against Judge Yadao for Knowingly Rendering Unjust Judgment with the Department of Justice.

(3) DOJ State Prosecutor Juan Pedro Navera dismissed the complaint on September 17, 2009, and likewise denied the motion for reconsideration on February 17, 2010;

WHEREAS, unknown to Judge Yadao, Villarosa on February 25, 2010, petitioned Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera for a review of the dismissal that it was only on March 11, 2010 that Judge Yadao discovered that Devanadera had reversed the resolution of dismissal and recommended instead her criminal indictment in a Resolution dated March 1, 2010;

WHEREAS, such indictment of a Judge on account of a decision rendered after trial produces a chilling effect on the entire trial court judges, and is in effect a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of trial judges all over the country;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Philippine Judges Association extend its all out support to Judge Theresa Yadao of Branch 81, RTC, Quezon City, and call upon the Office of the Court Administrator to pursue all courses of action possible to put an end to this travesty.

DONE in the City of Tagbilaran, Bohol, Philippines, this 26th day of March, 2010.

ANTONIO M. EDDING, JR.
President
Phil. Judges Association

Even anti-virus can cause glitches in polls–Joey de V

By Norman Bordadora and Dona Pazzibugan

HAVE AN ANTI-VIRUS UPDATE, one means to protect computers against disruptive programs, could cause glitches in the country's first automated election system on election day, a senatorial candidate warned yesterday.

Information technology businessman Jose de Venecia III issued the warning as he drew attention to a McAfee anti-virus update which caused disruptions in the operations of computers **worldwide earlier this week.**

"What owners of personal computers are familiar with Web security company McAfee. Windows computers worldwide were affected when a McAfee update confused their files," De Venecia said.

"Imagine what could happen if a virus were to strike the computer system the Commission on Elections is using for next month's elections. The effects could be disastrous," he added.

De Venecia, a former witness who alleged cowardice and kickbacks in a government telecommunications deal with Chinese firm ZTE, said the experience of computer users earlier this week "is a strong argument for the holding of a nationwide manual count of the vote."

Yesterday, he also urged the Comelec to reveal the results of the testing by an American third-party company on the source code to be used on the automated poll counting machines which, despite repeated requests, have not yet been disclosed for no apparent good reason, De Venecia said.

De Venecia is the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino's spokesperson for poll automation. He had been pushing for the automation of the elections only on a limited number of areas because he believes the Comelec is ill-prepared for such a huge undertaking.

The Comelec has said that it could conduct manual tallying to up to 30 percent of the 76,000 precincts nationwide.

Also yesterday, a group of lawyers led by former Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo called on the Comelec to allow the transmittal of count in all precincts of the votes cast for president and four other elective posts to check if the ballots cast would match the printed report on the precinct optical scan (PCOS) machines.

The Philippine Bar Association (PBA) said the manual tally could also be done for the votes cast for the vice president, congressmen, governor and mayor.

"This is the contingency plan and it will take them an hour," Marcelo, president of the PBA, said in an interview.

Smartmatic, telcos ink deal

By Kristine L. Alave

SMARTMATIC TIM CORP., THE Commission on Elections' (Comelec) automated elections provider, has teamed up with three telecommunications companies regarding arrangements for the transmission of election results on May 10.

Smartmatic and representatives of Globe Telecommunications, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Innove Communications, Digital Telecommunications Philippines and the satellite transmission provider signed a memorandum of agreement on Wednesday spelling out the special transmission arrangements.

Chair Jose Melo, who witnessed the signing, said the deal completes the final phase of the preparations for the country's first-ever nationwide computerized balloting.

The three big telecom networks have agreed to provide Smartmatic-TIM a private channel for the transmission of the results via General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) and Digital Subscriber Language (DSL) networks.

"It's not a public Internet network. It's private," stressed Bernie Garcia, the Comelec's Information Technology (IT) undersecretary, and.

The telcos also agreed to provide Smartmatic-TIM and the Comelec with back-up data centers.

Alberto Garcia, Smartmatic project director said the security concerns raised by the telcos had been addressed.

Probe of Russian plane crash in Pampanga is on

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

MEXICO, PAMPANGA—THE Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) yesterday started investigating the crash of a cargo plane here Wednesday night that killed two Russians and a Filipino.

Three other crew members who survived—Russian pilot Yuri Tochonoy, co-pilot Dmitriy Stratishchy and crewman Bokhodir Rozizo, both of Uzbekistan...were released to the custody of a consul from the Russian embassy. They signed the police blotter before being released to leave.

The charred remains of the three crew—Russians Mikolay Baranov and Vadim Yakimov and Bulgarian Tsvetkoslav Gantchoukh—were recovered from the crash site near Barangay San Pascual and Lapac here on Thursday.

Pioneer Aviation Clark International Airport Corp. (CIAC) retrieved the plane's black box which would have recorded details of the flight of the Russian-built Antonov 12 from Cebu to the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA), some 20 km northeast of this town.

The survivors declined requests for interviews.

Supt. Ferdinand Reyes, town police chief, said the police were filing a complaint for reckless imprudence resulting in multiple physical injuries against the company that owned the aircraft. Police identified the owner as Inter-Island Cargo based in Pasay City.

The firm has yet to give a statement.

Renato Ilyoco, CIAC vice president for administration, said CIAC and the CAAP were eyeing the real ownership of the plane after preliminary investigators showed that cargo firm United Parcel Service (UPS) had contracted Inter-Island Cargo (IIC) for transport of its deliveries.

Ilyoco said they were sorting through "complex deal" to the lease of the plane's ownership and contracts after it appeared that DHL subcontracted another airline for the delivery.

"So far, we know that DMIA was the airport of destination and Cebu the origin. IIC was the cargo airline," he said.

The four-engine plane was a smaller version of the military's C-130 aircraft. Breaking in two, it produced huge balls of fire that took about 20 fire trucks four hours to extinguish.

Several farmers are seeking compensation for the damage to their rice fields, Hexco said.

CRASH INVESTIGATORS sift through the wreckage of the Russian cargo plane in Mexico, Pampanga.

Tochonoy, police said, managed to land the plane in the rice fields as soon as the fire started in the cabin.

The fire may have been caused by faulty wiring, an initial investigation report showed.

The report said the plane's right tire gave way upon landing causing the aircraft to roll on its right wing, torrent and spin several times before burning into flames.

Police said the plane was not carrying any cargo, having unloaded it in Cebu.

While Tochonoy, Stratishchy and Rozizo managed to jump out of the plane before it exploded, investigators said Baranov, Yakimov and Gantchoukh were not able to undo their seat belts in time.

The last contact the plane had with the DMIA control tower was at 10:48 p.m. At 9:30 p.m. a resident of Barangay Lapac called the police to report the accident.

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- Bernadette Alfeon

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- Carmi Martin

"I could shred before to lose my excess pounds. First my thighs and butt area – nakaka-pressure. When I had a film with back shots, grabe my butt jumbo ing! So I tried Endermologie. My cellulite and flabs were reduced! My clothes even fit me better now. For a safer, better and easier way of losing fat – I definitely recommend Endermologie!"

- Ana Gabionda

British envoy says he, too, met with leading presidential bets

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HIGH THRILL AT SPLASH ISLAND

By Cynthia D. Rubrico

BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE PHILIPPINES Stephen Lillie said he has been talking to the leading candidates for the presidency and says this as part of the normal duties of a foreign diplomat.

"I'm not many of those during the campaign period but I'm not going to tell you when and who. It was a sort of general, informal discussion," Lillie told reporters in a chance he gave last Wednesday to celebrate the British Queen Elizabeth II's 84th birthday.

Reports earlier this week quoted Liberal Party (LP) standard bea. Benigno Aquino III as saying that he had had some contact with EU governmental officials and US counterparts.

His chosen rival, the Nacionalista Party's (NP) Sen. Manuel Villar, also said he had spoken regularly with the former EU ambassador to the country, Kirsty Hewing.

Candidates' meetings with EU diplomats aren't unlike media speculation as probably an easy support for the candidates' bests the still influential Euro colonies.

According to Lillie, there is nothing unusual about presidential candidates or leading politicians meeting or talking with US or other foreign diplomats, even during an election period.

"It's my country's foreign diplomats talk to leading politicians of that country because they want to know what politicians think and tell their what diplomats and their governments to think, he said.

"What diplomats don't do is to try to get involved in the electoral process. The election issues to be cast by the electorate, their opinion and the outcome of the election is not in the decision of the Filipino people. And the British government will support the decision and will work with whoever is elected to the next president of the Philippines," Lillie said.

The ambassador would not comment on the candidates' platforms of government and how they are faring in independent surveys.

"I think all the businessmen, political candidates in the Philippines elsewhere, are talking about developing the economy, about making the Philippines more business friendly, and that is we hope to see," he said.

He said that in his meetings with the candidates and politicians, they discussed British concerns and also British investments and strategic, climatic changes and other issues like trade, energy and transportation.

Lillie said his government was ready to work with the new administration in further strengthening Philippine-British relations, improve British trade investments and exchanges between the two countries, as well as continue working for peace in Mindanao.

Following developments

He said his government was following the elections and developments here closely and that the British Embassy in Manila will be fielding a dozen observers to various polling stations in Metro Manila on election day.

"I very much hope that the elections will be peaceful and free, and honest and credible. It's very important for the Philippines that the elections credible," he said.

Lillie commended the Commission on Elections for taking positive steps to counting priority issues for disabled voters in the polling stations.

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Still no word on seized Swiss

DAVAO ANGA (DT)— Swiss Filipino Christian Rieth, arrested last 27th day as a captive reenacts but authorities still know no clue as to the identity of his kidnappers and still less about where they are keeping their victim.

Rieth, 73, was abducted by gunmen from his beachfront home in Barrio Talomo village here on April 6.

Major Gilbert Lebrigas, who heads the local crisis management committee on the abduction said there has been "no word, no demand, no contact" from the kidnappers.

"We've been closely monitoring with a lot of people, friends, and I've been in communication with Rieth's brother many times, but there was, didn't receive a single call or even a piece of info," he said.

Lebrigas said most of the information that have been released concerning Rieth's whereabouts have been based purely.

Supt. Alberto Bravo, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), said the only information they have on Rieth's abductors was based on the description made by witnesses.

He said aside's sketches of some of the suspects were made based on witness descriptions.

"One of the witnesses even said a suspect talked his name. It turned the suspect knew him," Bravo said.

Bravo said an finalize believes that Rieth's abduction might not be for reasons other ell.

"We are also looking at business interests and land disputes," he said.

The includes a dispute involving Rieth's mango and coconut plantations, he said.

Rieth, who was born of a Swiss father and a Filipino mother, belonged to a family of landowners.

Atty. Glenda Jaquilmor Abadesco

Ombudsman OKs graft raps vs Iloilo gov

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE OMBUDSMAN HAS APPROVED THE filing of graft charges against Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Jr. for granting a quarry permit to an unqualified private contractor who allegedly served as a dummy for another company.

In a resolution, the Ombudsman said the permit allowed the private contractor to pursue with a mining company owned by in-laws of Tupas' son Neil and which later bagged a P4.5 million subcontract to build the New Iloilo Airport.

The resolution, signed by Overall Deputy Ombudsman Orlando Casimiro, recommended the filing of graft charges against Tupas and six private contractors in the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court.

The Ombudsman also found Tupas guilty of grave misconduct, dishonesty and conduct prejudicial to the best interests of the public based on the case.

Tupas was slapped with dismissal but because of his reelection in 2007, the penalty was deemed condonable.

Tupas, who is serving his third term as governor, is running for representative in Iloilo's fourth district under the Liberal Party.

Ombudsman records showed that Tupas approved a permit to quarry for private contractor Melvin Sequerra in September 2004. Two months later, Sequerra entered into a lease agreement with M. Mendoza Enterprises Inc. (MMEI).

In April 2005, MMEI entered into a subcontract agreement with Taisei-Shimizu Joint Venture (TSJV) for the New Iloilo Airport project.

In November 2005, the Environment Management Bureau (EMB) issued a cease and desist order against Sequerra for illegally processing materials outside the allowed area.

Pro-life group junks Noynoy

By Rollie Neal Vidoza

CEBU CITY—A PRO-LIFE group in the Visayas has smoked Liberal Party standard-bearer Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III for supporting the passage of the Reproductive Health (RH) bill and called on pro-life voters to reject him at the polls.

Paul Hubahib, spokesperson and member of the Task Force Ready and Able (TFPL)-Visayas core group, said Aquino and most of his coalition candidates are staunch proponents of the RH bill.

"I don't care if the Catholic Church will abandon me because of my support for the Reproductive Health (RH) bill, the most sincere (sic) servant(s) of (God) and (country) (are) Team Bro. (Manny) Villar and Tito (Sotto)," Hubahib quoted Aquino as saying.

Aside from Aquino, TFPL is also campaigning against LP senatorial candidates Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel, Rudy Fortun, Nicanor Antonio and Ted Failon Ongpauco III, which the group said are mild anti-life candidates.

The Catholic Church is against artificial birth control methods, which the bill will promote for through government programs.

TFPL-Philippines, which is composed of parish pastoral groups and private individuals, claims a total membership of about 150,000. TFPL-Visayas cleared by Douglas Capeton has a core group of 11 members, including two priests.

"The fight against the RH bill is the greatest fight that we can ever wage. Against the agenda, vision, mission, operations of religious communities, the RH bill strikes at the very core of what is evil and to us literature is verily the destruction of our youth, our families and our faith," Hubahib said.

Hubahib said that TFPL had made the RH bill as electoral issue so that the bill would not be passed and would not also be considered by anyone.

"Make sure you elect a candidate that is pro-life, pro-family and pro-God," he said. "We have to fight for life, life for our Church and for the life of our young."

In its meeting last April 12 in Cagayan de Oro City, TFPL-Visayas agreed to endorse eight pro-life senatorial candidates.

These are Franklin Drilon of LP, Juan Ponce Enrile of Partido ng Bayang Pilipino, Jr., Lakas-ng Ang Kapatiran party, Alexi Lacson of UP Diwa, Pasiansol of the Nacionalista Party, Adrian Sison of the Nationalist People's Coalition and Primitivo "Tito" Sarmiento of PIGLAS.

TFPL also endorsed Bill as a pro-life party-list.

In Cebu, TFPL-Visayas is endorsing the following candidates for their pro-life stance: Gwen Garcia for Governor; Rhandee Osmeña for District 1, Ramon Durano VI for District 2, Raul del Mar for District 3, Ramon Durano VI for District 4, Antonio Cuenco for District 5, Eduardo Gullas for District 6, Celestino Martinez III for District 7, Pablo John Garcia for District 8, Pablo John Garcia (2nd Placement) for District 9, Antonio Yapha for District 10, Eugenio Jose Lagdameo Jr. for District 11, Simplicio Catane for Cebu City North District, Raul Del Mar for Cebu City South District, Edgar Labella for Mandaue City, Jonathan Cortes for Lapu-Lapu City, Celestino Martinez III for Talisay City, Vincent Franco Frasco for Naga City, Nilo Dizon for Toledo City, Jerry Sanchez for Carcar City, Jerry Sanchez (2nd Placement) for Sibonga, Jerry Sanchez (3rd Placement) for Argao, Jerry Sanchez (4th Placement) for Dalaguete, Jerry Sanchez (5th Placement) for Alcantara, Jerry Sanchez (6th Placement) for 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Palace on GMA's manicurist: Give her a chance at Pag-Ibig

By TJ Burgonio

MALACAÑANG HAS DEFENDED PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's appointment of her manicurist to the board of the Pag-Ibig Fund, saying that she only "wanted to make sure that poor government employees were represented by one of their own" on the board of the government home financing agency.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Gary Olivar said in a briefing that Pag-Ibig allows one board seat to be held by a representative of government employees; hence, this was "appropriated" for the Philippine Government Employees Consortium (PGEC) employed by the government and not by Ms Arroyo personally.

The Pag-Ibig board of trustees is composed of the chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, the finance, budget, labor and trade secretaries, the CEO of Pag-Ibig, two representatives each of private employers and private employees, and a representative of government employees.

Rush to judgment

Responding to critics who said the President selected her people in places in the government of her origin down to Jaro, Olivar said the public should wait to learn about Carpio's background instead of rushing to judge her.

"It's not correct to question someone just because he or she has a poor relation in life. But it's certainly reasonable to ask for more information from affected constituencies. The same is true with the gentleman," he said.

Ms Arroyo also appointed Ely Pelaez-Gutierrez, Armando Intengan, as a deputy in the Luneta Park Administration. He is not related to the President, Olivar added.

Olivar said that from 2001 to 2008, the number of senior government positions held by career executive service officers increased from one-third to one-half of the bureaucracy.

"The President can't be accused of debasing standards of government performance in a matter of principle based on those appointments because the rest of her [executive] officials," he said.

But Carpio's appointment has continued to draw criticism.

Liberal Party (LP) senatorial candidate Jr. Montes Rodriguez yesterday said the appointment was the fundamental problem with the Arroyo administration.

"She has always treated the government as her personal fiefdom," Rodriguez said.

Another LP senatorial candidate, Mona Aceveda, said this was an example of how lax the administration has been.

Improve corruption

"When it was about its appointing powers and made the intelligence of the Filipino... what this government should clean is the rigid corruption," Aceveda said.

Perena ng Bayang Filipino (PBF) vice presidential candidate Antonio C. Bruno said Ms Arroyo's "unskilled appointment of unworthy persons" to state corporations was not just her version of a "loyalty rewards program" but her guarantee that loyalists were entrenched in each arm government from long after she was gone from Malacañang.

"I do not know what lasting reforms she must [for she] to the true human that a P203 billion fund would be in good hands if the persons who's making her friends beneficial to its intended [have]," Bruno said.

AFP chief vows no junta

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THERE WILL BE NO MILITARY JUNTA THAT will take over the government should there be a failure of elections on May 10, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon assured the public.

In a command conference with the top brass on Wednesday, Esperon said a military junta would be "suicide" and that it was never on the "list of things to do" by the military under his leadership.

"We, who are only ten in our stand for the Constitution, we can take care with our in our stand against a revolutionary government or a junta, let's fight it," Esperon told the AFP's major service commanders and other officers.

Earlier, Pastor "Boy" Saycon of the Coalition for Philippine Affairs (Copa) had claimed that Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales was preparing the military for a possible failure of elections.

Saycon said Gonzales was doing this during his quarterly battalion assessment with military commanders across the country.

In an interview with reporters outside the Bangit explained that Gonzales had been invited by the Philippine Army to speak at bureau attended by commanders on matters concerning the Department of National Defense, particularly the "new modernization concepts" of the AFP.

"It doesn't necessarily mean that he is digging for Super Lolo politicals," Bangit told reporters after attending a day-long conference with the Philippine National Police and Commission on Elections at Camp Crame yesterday.

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Enough power for Mindanao for May 10 polls

By Amy R. Remo

MINDANAO CAN EXPECT AN adequate power supply during the May elections, as the private sector and Department of Energy (DOE) will jointly carry out concrete measures to avert any power outages, according to Acting Energy Secretary Jose C. Rono Jr.

These short-term measures—which include commitments from power generation companies and other stakeholders in the island—were discussed during a meeting on Monday, Rono said in a statement.

The energy chief reported that Crystal Sugar Co. will commission its biomass cogeneration plant to supply as much as 7 megawatts in additional capacity either to First Bukidnon Electric Cooperative (Fibeco) or directly to the Mindanao Grid—once operational issues have been resolved.

The Abaniki Bel Wecker Mindanao Power Corp. has also committed to increase its capacity to 100 MW from the current 80 MW.

Commitments

According to Ronero, the DOE has also received commitments from two large-scale industrial companies to reduce their electricity usage.

Global Steel Phil. and Treasure Steel Corp. have both committed to drop their loads by 20 MW each. Another 60 MW reduction in power usage is expected from other large users of electricity.

The DOE is still looking for other cooperatives willing to voluntarily drop their loads, said Ronero.

He said that by April 26, he expects the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP), the private operator of the country's transmission utility, to submit a list of industries it deems capable of reducing their power consumption, particularly during the election period.

Ronero also said the DOE and other state energy agencies are managing the water elevation in Lake Lanao to increase the capacity of the hydroelectric power plant there to as much as 420 MW from the current 100 MW.

Energy security

He said the energy department has also obtained the commitment of state-owned National Power Corp. and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. to enter into no "speculative and unnecessary agreements" with Coral Holdings Corp. to operate the Digos diesel power plant. This is expected to add another 15 MW to the Mindanao Grid.

In the same meeting, Ronero stressed the need for the country to diversify energy sources to ensure energy security over the medium and long term.

"Over reliance on a single electric power source isn't good in long-term planning process. We need to strike a balance and look into other sources of energy such as coal. There are new clean-coal technologies which have been developed and this is an avenue which the country should look into," he said.

Giving investors incentives to create a market conducive to prospective energy projects in Mindanao would be part of medium- and long-term solutions to the country's power needs, he said.

Ronero said he was in favor of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) being implemented in Mindanao as soon as possible as this could provide investors the biggest amount of economic market for the power they would be generating through their proposed power projects.

The government is making to fill in the supply gap—particularly in Mindanao where the debut for WESM is delayed to December—to ensure adequate power supply for the May 10 elections.

As of Tuesday, the power supply deficit in Mindanao stood at 583 MW.

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Metro simmers anew at 36.8°

By Alexis Pupa

THE TEMPERATURE WENT UP again in Metro Manila yesterday, which tied with Tuesday as the hottest day of the year so far in the metropolis.

The maximum temperature reached 36.8 degrees Celsius in Metro Manila, recorded at 2:45 p.m. at the weather bureau's Science Garden in Diliman, Quezon City.

This was the same maximum temperature reading for Tuesday, said the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

According to weather forecaster Buisel Victa, the ridge of a high-pressure area is still causing warm and moist winds from the Pacific to blow into the country.

"There are hardly any clouds to block the sunlight. This also means there are no rains. Also, the month of April usually means hot weather," he said.

He said the country can expect the same weather conditions well into the weekend.

As of 2 p. m. yesterday, the maximum temperature in Tuguegarao, considered the hottest spot in the country, was 37.1 Celsius. This is a shade lower than the hottest reading for this year at 38.5 Celsius.

Baguio City, the country's summer capital, had a reading of 20.6 degrees Celsius yesterday.

Pagasa said the whole country can expect partly cloudy to cloudy weather, except for the eastern parts which could experience some isolated rainshowers.

Jamby to go on hunger strike for clean elections

By Kristine L. Alave

FOR THE SAKE OF CREDIBLE elections, independent presidential candidate Sen. Jamby Madrigal is willing to go on a hunger strike.

Madrigal crashed a press briefing being conducted by Commissioner Rene Sarmiento at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) yesterday to join the call of a small farmers' group that is urging the Comelec to conduct a parallel manual count of the vote.

"My hope that the en banc will listen to us. Otherwise, we will go on hunger strike until the elections," she told barangays.

"If the Comelec won't heed us, maybe God will," Madrigal said.

Madrigal, who is running without the support of a political party, said she was worried by reports of possible massive cheating in the May 10 automated elections.

"We do not believe that there will be a 100 percent problem-free automated election," she said.

Madrigal said a parallel count, in which the Board of Election Inspectors will count the ballots after transmitting the results, was the surest way of verifying that the voting machines of Comelec did the actual ballots cast on May 10.

But the senator could be holding it several days without any food as the Comelec appears to be leaning toward ignoring the proposal for a parallel manual count.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo said this would just add another layer to the already complicated process and delay the proclamation of the winners.

"You can't have two standards for counting," Melo said.

He said that when the Comelec will do a random manual audit of votes, which is prescribed by law, this will be done after the winners are proclaimed.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday April 23, 2010
3rd Week of Easter
Gospel / Adalbert

1st Reading: Acts 9:1-20
Gospel: Jn 6:52-59

The Jews were arguing among themselves, "How can this man give us flesh to eat?" So Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives with eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.

"My flesh is really food and my blood is drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, live in me and I in them. Just as the Father, who is life, sent me and I have life from the Father, so whoever eats me will have life from me. This is the bread which came from heaven, unlike that of your ancestors, who ate and later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever."

Jesus spoke in this way in Capernaum when he taught them in the synagogue.

Commentary

"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life and I will raise them up on the last day."

By being the life of man we begin to live the life of God the Creator.

We live to possess Baptismal life.

We begin to see the world as God sees the world.

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30 make it as anti-graft 'scholars'

THIRTY DELEGATES FROM 26 AGENCIES are now taking up the third anti-graft graduate course of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) as "scholars" of the six-month immersion training.

The scholars passed the exam qualifying them for the Graduate Certificate Course in Corruption Prevention (GCCCP) Batch 3, according to the PAGC chief, Secretary Constancio de Guzman.

She said that upon graduation, the scholars would join the ranks of the 26 graduates who had taken the first two since 2008.

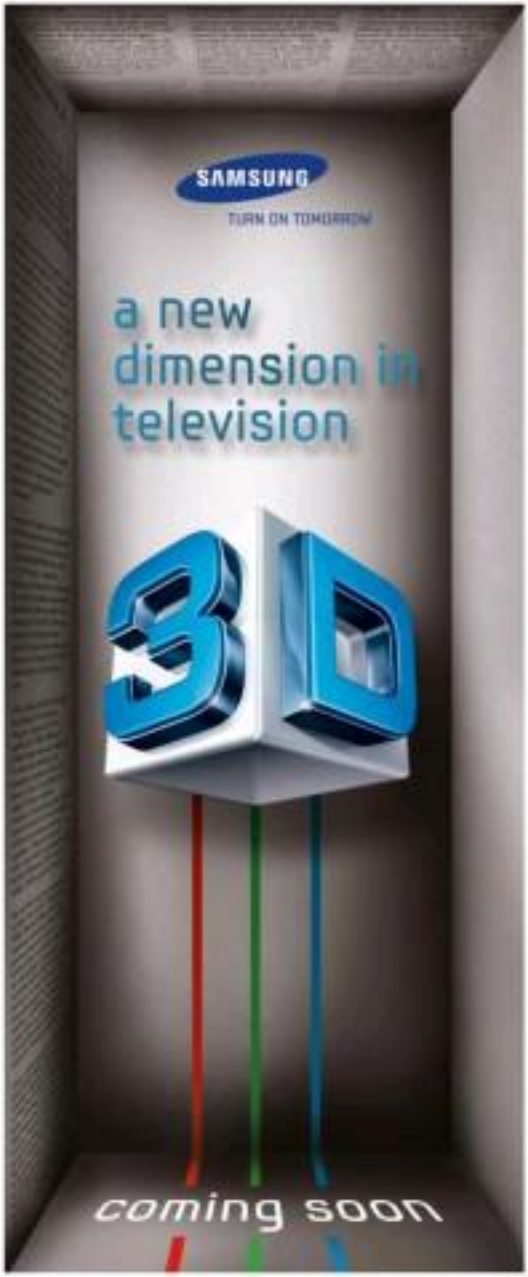
De Guzman explained that the GCCCP which is being taught at the Development Academy of the Philippines in Tagaytay City, enabled the scholars to earn units for a master's degree, but only after successfully designing and implementing Anti-Corruption Prevention Action Plan (CPAP) in their respective agencies.

A scholar's CPAP must focus on an area in his/her agency found to be vulnerable to corruption as discussed and approved by the agency's management. The CPAP must include a reform initiative that fully addresses the problem," De Guzman said in a statement.

Each scholar has until May to formulate and implement his first CPAP, which is the final requirement for graduation, she said.

The final defense of the CPAP is scheduled in June, shortly before graduation.

The third batch of 30 GCCCP scholars came from, among others, the labor, trade, education, environment, agencies reform, health, agriculture, tourism, and foreign affairs departments, Office of the President, Public Attorney's Office, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Philippine High School for the Arts, and Philippine Drug Enforcement agency.



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LUNGSOD NG MALOLOS, MARIKINA, ORAS NG TAGUIG AT PATEROS

TUESDAY TO TUESDAY, APR. 27 - 27, 2010

MUNICIPALITY OF MALOLOS AND MUNICIPALITY OF PULILAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010

MANILA, MAKALLUYONG CITY AND QUEZON CITY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2010

QUEZON CITY AND CALOOCAN CITY

WEDNESDAY TO THURSDAY, APR. 28 - 29, 2010

MUNICIPALITY OF MEYCAUAYAN AND VALENZUELA CITY

THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2010

CALOOCAN CITY (GRACE PARK)

THURSDAY TO FRIDAY, APR. 29 - 30, 2010

MUNICIPALITY OF MEYCAUAYAN

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2010

MALABON (ARTACHO AND MORGADANES)

CITY OF MALOLOS

FRIDAY TO SATURDAY, APR. 30 - MAY 1, 2010

PASIG CITY AND REAL PROVINCE (CAINTA AND TAYTAY)

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2010

MANILA (ERMITA)

LAGUNA (CALAMBA)

SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2010

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Urban poor groups form Green Army for Teodoro

URBAN POOR GROUPS NATIONWIDE have formed a "Green Army" to work for the election of presidential candidate Gilbert "Gibo" Teodoro, the administration party Lakas-Kampi-CMD announced yesterday.

The party said more than 500 leaders of some 60 urban poor groups nationwide are organizing Green Army brigades in their respective communities in campaigns and ensure the victory of Teodoro in the May 10 elections.

Samy Bacdayan, head of the Oficina ng mga Alkalde sa Pinaunlaran sa Bahay ng Dayaan (Kampi) and spokesperson of the newly formed Green Army brigades, said the group decided to back Teodoro's presidential bid because it was disappointed by the negative campaigns waged by his rivals.

"We are dismayed by the mudslinging campaign style of the other presidential candidates. We fear their negative campaigns can only mean an unstable government and ungovernable Philippines if any of these mudslinging candidates wins in the May 10 elections," he said in Pilipino. He was referring to survey leaders Senators Benigno Aquino III and Manny Villar and former president Joseph Estrada.

Meanwhile, Jesus Dureza, president of the Pueda Binondo Coalition, claimed that a survey among the urban poor in Metro Manila had Teodoro enjoying popular support.

In six big events attended by leaders of urban poor groups held on March and early April, a total of 963 joined the surveys conducted after the meetings.

Dureza said Teodoro was the choice for endorsement of 43.4 percent of those in attendance of the meetings, followed third with 1.27 and Villar, who claims to have lived in the slums of Tondo, received 21 votes. Evangelist Eddie Villanueva had 17 votes; Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño, Richard Gordon, 6 and JC de los Reyes, 5 each. Sen. Jamby Madrigal received only one vote.

Nolasco said the survey is still undecided.

The surveys, the party said in a press statement, were conducted in urban poor areas in Bataan and Binondo, Manila; Sauz, Bonifacio Terrace, Malabon; Golden Tile Tower, San Jose del Monte, Bulacan; Caloocan City and Pasay City.

Bacdayan said her group, composed of urban dwellers in the metropolis, including pregnant and lactating women, youth and women's groups, and senior citizens' groups, vowed to organize urban poor families in support of Teodoro.

"We will organize Metro Manilenos to organize massive barangay campaigns in Luzon where we will not just campaign but will also deliver a mass turnout, solid vote for Gibo Teodoro," she said.

The new group with 500 leaders representing people's organizations at the grassroots level took their oath as green army officers during the group's launching on Wednesday followed by a 'fondo fight to show unity behind Gibo.

Toyota offers free repairs to Prado SUVs

By Tess B. Salazar
Reporting

FILIPINO OWNERS OF TOYOTA LAND Cruiser Prados will get a free software upgrade for their vehicles to suppress the electronic system for better stability control starting next month, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. (TMPC) has announced.

Covered are 158 of the luxury sport utility vehicles' 2009 and 2008 models in the country.

TMPC vice president for customer service operations Vladimir Mangonil III told the business the upgrade was part of a global effort by Toyota to enhance vehicle control of the Prado and eliminate unintended sideways skidding during high-speed cornering.

Only left-hand drive models will receive the upgrade.

TMPC issued a statement Tuesday announcing it would conduct a "special service campaign" to address the problem.

TMPC said it had started getting in touch with Prado owners and would perform the upgrades in their homes at no cost. Owners may call the TMPC customer assistance hotline at 914-9200 or may surrender Toyota dealers nationwide.

Mangonil said Toyota received a report last week from the influential Consumer Reports magazine in the United States describing how to a test run requiring the Prado to make sudden turns at speeds of up to 150 kph the vehicle tended to drift or skid sideways. With an AFP report

Agra breaks into tears

From page A1

Agra said being in the headlines and followed by angry reporters almost taking a toll on him and his family.

He said he resented having his name "jeopardized to me by my father" inside the subject of such wrongdoing...a reference to his ties with the words "Agra Inside" and "Agra Jr." held up by protesters at the Department of Justice.

"That hurts me because I am virtually gay," he said.

He also said he was glad that his family was abroad, and pleaded with his cronies to spare his loved ones from their anger.

Public outrage notwithstanding, Malacañang yesterday made it clear that President Macapagal-Arroyo remained behind Agra.

Her deputy spokesperson, Gary Olivar, acknowledged that Agra's controversial decisions had led to political cost on the unpopular President, but maintained that "the primary consideration is still what the law allows and requires us to do."

"Sometimes, you make the legally correct decision and you have no choice if there are costs associated with it," Olivar said, adding that Agra "continues to enjoy the full discretion and authority of his office with respect to the conduct of government proceedings on the Hipodromo insurance case."

3 options

Later in an interview with reporters, Agra said he had reversed his earlier directive to Secretary Leandro Mendoza on the three, to for a review of the case, and was told then the justice department should just close attention to the records attached to the motion for reconsideration.

"So they were not asking that based on the current records I have I should reverse my decision," he said.

Agra said he was "standing firm" on his resolution on the impairments, reiterating that if new solid facts or evidence and documents presented to him.

Until and unless a motion for reconsideration is filed, I will stick with my decision," he said. "If there is a motion for reconsideration [filed], I have three options. Affirm my earlier decision, modify it, or reverse it."

Agra said part of Malacañang's order was for him to submit a weekly report on the developments in the Hipodromo case.

He said he was considering forming a new panel of persons to review Zaldy and Ahmad Ampatuan's case once given lawyers of the accused—unless Mayo's motion for reconsideration.

"I'll look at the evidence again. For right now, I'm more inclined to [say] it is good. But of course, they still have the case otherwise put in the case," he said.

Agra said he requested the protest rallies mounted by the families of the 57 massacre victims.

"I hope [their anger] wouldn't reach a point where my life and the lives of my family are under threat," he said. "My conscience is clean. I can still sleep soundly at night, albeit in shorter hours because of the heavy workload."

Dinkar him

The families of nine of the 32 media workers killed in Maguindanao in November 2009 yesterday formally sought Agra's inhibition as a lawyer for joining the resolution supposedly contrary to law and for deceit and gross misconduct in office.

The victims' families represented by lawyers Harry Roque Jr. filed the petition before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines office in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

In his resolution which he issued at the close of office hours on April 16, a Friday, Agra ordered prosecutors to "immediately" transmit the information filed in court and withdraw Zaldy Ampatuan, the suspended governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and Maguindanao Vice Gov. Ahmad Ampatuan. In fact, the murder case and to report back in four working five days upon receipt of the order.

But Roque said Agra should have dismissed the Ampatuans' petitions for reverse from the start because there did not give the complainants a copy of their petition.

Roque also took Agra to task for violating the complainants' right to due process by not giving them an chance to comment.

He said it was "fatal and inconsistent" for Agra lawyer like Agra, to "fast-lane the rule of the other party" before issuing a resolution.

"It was utterly unlawful, dishonest, deceitful, immoral and unfairly slanderous for the legal petitioner that immediately proceeded to subpoena his resolution without consideration of the complainants' rights to be heard," he said.

Disregard of evidence

Roque also said Agra violated ethical standards when he refuses for failing to seek the approval of Chief Justice Renato Corona and Associate Justices before issuing his resolution.

He said Agra's finding that there was lack of probable cause against Zaldy and Ahmad Ampatuan is "founded on evidence" unlawful, dishonest and deceitful disregard of the evidence."

But in a statement yesterday, Ampatuan family's lawyer Sigfrid Fortun claimed that Agra's exoneration of the two Ampatuans was "based on evidence."

Fortun played down the testimony of witness Kenny Dalondag, who was identified as a member of the Ampatuan private army, claiming that he saw Zaldy Ampatuan giving money to some of the house of the politan's Andal Ampatuan Jr. in Shariff Aguak in the evening of Nov. 22, 2009, the eve of the massacre.

He insisted that Zaldy was not in Maguindanao at the time, and that Zaldy's cell phone records showed a call was made at 7:00 p.m. from Davao City.

Fortun also said Ahmad Ampatuan was not included in the original complaints prepared by the National Bureau of Investigation on Dec. 11, 2009, and by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group on Dec. 7, 2009.

"How could Secretary Agra therefore order the indictments and continued detention of a person who was not even mentioned in the complaints filed by the NBI and CIDG?" he said.

For court to settle

Olivar acknowledged that the decision facing the two impeachment could be seen as an "unnecessary aggravation" in the sense that it was something Agra could have left to the courts to settle.

"I understand, from the point of view of political expediency, you can make that argument," he said. "But from the point of view of the representation of law, I am not sure that that's an argument that can be made or would be considered as legitimate."

Olivar claimed that Sh. Agra was not informed about the petitions before Agra made it public.

"I would imagine that she was also sure to let when the first broke in the news," he said, noting that Cabinet officials were not necessarily required to "clear everything in advance with her."

'Politics before justice'

Olivar assured the relatives of the massacre victims that Sh. Agra was "signals that the judicial system will prosecute the perpetrators to the fullest extent of the law so that justice will be served."

But the human rights group Amnesty International (AI) expressed concern over the case, saying the dropping of murder charges against the two suspects "sets back the cause of justice before the country and efforts" "stands of placing politics before justice and human rights."

In a statement, AI said the government must continue to pursue the case against the Ampatuans as part of its commitment.

"The Philippines must abide by its obligations under international human rights law to ensure effective remedy for victims of human rights abuses and their families, and to prevent impunity," Alvaid.

It said the Maguindanao Massacre has had yet the Philippine government "under international scrutiny."

AI also said allegations of poll fraud in 2004 had "cast a heavy shadow" on the next elections.

"With the elections coming up in May the Philippine government needs to demonstrate that it will not tolerate impunity for human rights for political gain," it said.

With reports from Alexis Joyce, Michael Lee Dizo and Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

The other kiss of death

THE PRIME SUSPECT BEHIND THE HORRIFIC massacre in Ampatuan, Maguindanao, can endorse any presidential candidate he likes, or even as many candidates as there are days in a week, but can he rally a news conference right to prison to announce his endorsement? That is the crucial question that must be asked about Tuesday's political gimmick by Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr.

EDITORIAL A gimmick it certainly was, but it was also yet another proof that justice for the rich and the well-connected is different from justice for the rest of us.

Apparently all it took for Ampatuan or Sen. Manny Villar to have a news conference with a political (not a legal) agenda was a phone call, from one of his lawyers, to officials of the Quezon City Jail Annex in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City. Senior Insp. Lloyd Gonzaga, QCJA warden, said the reason he gave was "no follow." In other words, it was an accommodation.

Gonzaga said he approved the phased-in request because it had Ampatuan's consent. Now this attempt at a reason already begs many questions, including: How did Gonzaga confirm that Ampatuan had given his consent? Because it was his lawyer who called—and thus presumably spoke for him? Then that would show Gonzaga's reason to be a mere excuse, a rationalization. If consent of the detainee is the only criterion for approving such requests, then a detainee can hold a press conference inside the prison compound about anything under the sun. And it brings us back to the crucial question: Can a detainee call for a politically partisan news conference?

We realize that, as a detainee and not a convicted criminal, Ampatuan has not lost all of his civil rights, but can he turn his prison into a virtual political rally?

We would not use the same thing if the so-called Morong 43 were to call for a press conference, to announce the political candidacies they endorse. That would be very different from a news conference where, say, they discuss their legal predicament, or the legal aspects of their detention.

The point is, the administration of justice is difficult enough, without detainees using prison cells as a forum for politically partisan activities. Indeed, the example of detained marinduque Rep. Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV or Col. Ariel Querubin or Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim tells us that any political statement or activity is discouraged, if it is unfavorable to the Aquino administration. The only reason, then, that the people behind Ampatuan's news conference, and the authorities who approved it, saw it as favorable to the administration.

And why did they think so? Because of the rumors of Ampatuan's endorsements. A day before the conference, the two men reported that Ampatuan's politically influential clan in Maguindanao had endorsed Nacionalista standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar. And a few days earlier, Ampatuan, who is alleged to have taken part in the actual killing and mutilation of the massacre victims, was seen wearing Nacionalista campaign paraphernalia.

That is no concern to us—except that just days later Ampatuan suddenly and mysteriously remembered, during the news conference, as a supporter of Villar's main rival, Liberal presidential candidate Sen. Benigno Aquino III.

We do not expect Ampatuan to be insensitive to the *balimbing* craze in the Nacionalista virus; he can change his political colors, as many others have. But something about the whole affair smells downright fishy.

This is not like Shoot, is what happened. After gauging growing public distaste for his endorsements of Villar, Ampatuan seems to have calculated that his kiss of death—like President Macapagal Arroyo's support, a true disincentive to voting—was better applied to his endorsee's rival. Again, nothing wrong with that, except that it involved treachery, and it required the willing cooperation of the authorities. That is what makes the entire affair sordid; in Ampatuan's mind-melting *de-numero*, his jailers served as his political coordinators.

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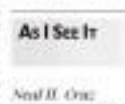
Growing militarization of civilian gov't



As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

AT THE FORUM IN MANILA FORUM LAST Monday, discussion focused on the growing militarization not only of the whole GMA administration but also of the Senate in particular. There are already four former military officers in the Senate: Gringo Honasan and Antonio Trillanes IV of coup-d'etat fame; Panfilo Lacson who is trying to overthrow the government, and retired Gen. Rodolfo Biazon whose term is expiring this June but who is running for a seat in the House of Representatives, and Pimentel. Lacson, Sen. Danilo Lim, Col. Ariel Querubin and retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan. If these four win, there would be seven military officers in the Senate out of 24 members.

Add the many retired military and police officers in the Cabinet (beginning with the defense secretary and other civilian agencies, plus the other military men who will be elected to the House of Representatives and other local government units, and it will look like a military coup has taken over the civilian government.

On the other hand, Biliran, was not unanimous of the late Speaker Ramon Mitra, defended the appointment and election of former military men to civilian government agencies. Military officers are trained to retire by law from the service at the mandatory age. He said, "They still have many fruitful years ahead of them. We should use their experience and expertise in the government. Saying it is not being fair."

For his part, Orac Lagos, chief of staff of Colonel Querubin, said the latter was appointed by the Senate because he wants to introduce reforms in the military, a catch that many young officers have been making for years, beginning with Honasan's Reform the Armed Forces Movement. Lagos is campaigning for his boss because the military refuses to allow Querubin, as well as General Lim, to leave their units to campaign. Nevertheless, they are confident the people will vote for them the same way they did for Senator Trillanes. Querubin was not allowed to leave his detention cell to campaign but was carried in the Senate anyway.

The other senatorial candidates in the forum (Sen. Pia Cayetano, former Sen. Francisco Tatad and human rights lawyer Pe Bautista) disagreed, saying that the whole government is being "militarized" which is dangerous. To which the two others retorted, "Shouldn't we not be voters decide that?"

As I see it, the people vote ex-military officers to civilian positions because they see the civilian rulers take them for granted, corrupt and inept, unable to curb the abuses of the administration. In contrast, they see the military officers who avoided against the government as heroes (e.g., Honasan and Trillanes, and now Lim and Querubin), action stars who did not hesitate to confront the bad guys in the movie reforms. Hasn't this attitude cost heroes (Nasi, Bonifacio, Aguinaldo, but Biliran it is) to fall during the Spanish colonization?

For his part, Cayetano said she would concentrate on issues pertaining to health, family, women, children, and especially on health. Indeed, she said, we the people neglected the economic life has already suffered many hills on health, family, women and children (two were aggravated by the last Congress.)

Tatad, a staunch pro-life statement, said he is also for reproductive health but without abortion and artificial birth control.

Biliran's advocacy is stronger and clearer: electricity. Having held various positions in the Philippine National Oil Co., Mitra learned of the potentials of energy which really grows in the Philippines.

"We have not explored our geophysical potentials and process them in addition to bio-ethanol, we can lessen our dependence on imported oil by at least 10 percent," he said. "Small as it may seem, it could cut the economy would be double or triple that. A simple legislation giving tax incentives to local oil and power producers will get this done."

Mitra also believes that agriculture is the long-term solution to achieve food security. He said the nation's agriculture budget is swamped by agroterrorists. "There is a need to overhaul the farmer's credit program and the redistribution of a truly effective agrarian reform program," he added.

Mitra said the key to empowering our farmers and modernizing our farms, through agricultural modernization projects. "But needs to be undertaken in the countryside." Providing our farmers and fishermen with roads to minimize agricultural products and lead to finally winning the fight against poverty. "So, our should ever go hungry again," he said.

On the peace talks, Mitra has protected the country side by side with valiant fighters in the Marine Corps, fighting insurgency, secessionism and common criminals. The experience gave him a lesson that changed his life forever: peace is a right, not a privilege.

"We have been engaged in peaceful negotiations based on mutual respect of religious and ideological beliefs. As a senator (if he wins), I will be guided by the belief that the way to end any kind of conflict is to respect the rights and beliefs of every individual regardless of religious or cultural differences," he said.

The other meaning of 'political court'

Passion for Reason

Raul C. Pangalangan

THE INQUIRER'S EDITORIAL TESTIFIED struck at the heart of the raging debate on whether President Macapagal-Arroyo's camp tried to appoint the next chief justice: the "unconstitutional truth" about the "public perception of the high court as politicized." I share that concern but offer another way to telling what makes a court political. All courts are political. It's just a difference of scratches they are rotated to the correct poles of perception of heroes. And it, in the fallen politics of constitutional courts, is the fallen politics of constitutional courts.

Luckily, a judge is considered "political" if the decides according to forbidden faculties to favor either his political patron or the highest bidder among the litigants. That is politics in its most banal, Machiavellian sense. That is "politics with a small p," and it is wrong. To hear from judges, you must turn to Hendrick Hudson.

Instead, there is a classic school of thought called Legal Realism advanced more than a century ago by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. who argued that all judges are human being affect by the whole range of human appeal even a Hercules—and that, he said, was simply to overlook. The real therefore was to expose and reduce those biases, and test them against the values enshrined in the Constitution. When a judge adheres to "politics with a capital P," it is good. That is why Holmes emphasized, "The business of a law school is . . . to teach law in the grand manner and to make great lawyers."

Holmes said, "The language of judicial decision is mainly the language of logic. And the logical method and form flatter that longing for certainty and for repose . . . but certainty generally is illusion, and repose is not the destiny of man. Behind the logical form lies a judgment as to relative worth and importance of competing legislative grounds, often an inarticulate and unconscious judgment, it is true, and yet the very root and marrow of the whole process. Sometimes gives any conclusion a logical form."

The effect of the Supreme Court furor can haunt the strong Holmes. That is why the Supreme Court's latest ruling contained a "Finis" and "Wood," which is worth quoting here:

> "It has been maintained [that] because all the Members of the present Court were appointed by the incumbent President, a majority [of them] are now pending before the influence to appoint the [next] Chief Justice. . . . The [assumption] is misplaced, and utterly unfair. . . . The Members of the Court vote on the sole basis of their conscience and the merits of the issues—they claim to the contrary proceeds from unfair and condescension."

I am prepared to grant as much to the Court and lament the personal attacks, especially against Justice Renato Corona and even, against his wife. The undersigned dedicates back the office of the chief justice and the Court itself.

EC critics are better off with the Legal Realist test. For instance, they invoke the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary from the executive. The EC argues that, by this, on the contrary, if you want the chief justice to be inclined to check the president, it's better to have the outgoing president do the appointing. From a purely textual standpoint, they're absolutely right. If the goal is to have checks and balances, why have the EC be appointed by the "check-ee"? But from a behavioral standpoint, they cannot be more wrong. The true threat to the Constitution right now is an outgoing Arroyo colluding to insulate herself from the courts after her presidential immunity disappears next year (see Sabio vs. Gordon).

That only brings us to the most problematic concluding what is theoretically necessary (not what is legally correct). The real fear of the Supreme Court is that it may logical barriers to substantive conclusion that I personally think is really the one, as I have explained in past columns.

The Court had several choices. One, it could have reached its hands and declared the case premature. Two, it could have affirmed with unfolded doctrine, and held that judicial appointments including that of the chief justice are covered by the electoral ban. And there, as it actually has done, the Court has carved the ball by the horns, reversed the case-law, and ruled that the election ban does not apply to the appointment of the chief justice.

From the standpoint of legal doctrine, either Option 1 or 2 would have offered the path of least resistance. Either way, the Court would be able to reconcile what is fundamentally about the truth: what is legally settled. But Option 3 takes the calculus because it pushed for detention from established doctrine while reminding the reach of a lame-duck President, insulating her and him justice.

To take Section 1, the Court had to destroy from settled rules that (1) clashing provisions must be reconciled and that the two competing clauses of the Constitution here can be reconciled by merely letting the sitting president appoint. The lesser point was when the Court gratuitously addressed a question not even presented by any party—whether the election ban applied even without a list from the Judicial and Bar Council—and suggested it would survive.

On the other hand, what troubles me with the unanimous view of the latest SC ruling is the silent, logical question that counts should mechanically apply the law and not interpret it, as if that were even only possible, neither courts should merely adhere to established doctrines and never reverse it. Remember that the most unpublished cases in civil rights were made by bold justices who detected in a moment of social denial the stirrings of a new consensus. Indeed, it is precisely legal texts "are beyond the rigid meanings that had crystallized in counter interests."

Comment: rpangalangan@gmail.com

The cruelty of chance

WORLD VIEW

Nina Khrushcheva

MOSCOW—IN RUSSIA, SOMEWHERE BEHIND every event lurks the question: Who is to blame? In the tragedy that claimed the lives of Polish President Lech Kaczynski and 95 other Polish leaders, we can answer that question with certainty in at least one respect: history is to blame.

The event is so hideous that it seems like a bad joke, or an evil plot, a mind-conjurer out of James Bond—or some combination of all three. Yet the truth that his next all of Poland into mourning was none of those things. A tragedy that defies any logical explanation could not only ever thing be merely a chance.

What if no fog prevented the jet's landing at Smolensk airport? What if the plane was not a 20-year-old, Russian-made Tupolev 154, but a newer and safer model? What if the Polish pilot had always flown together, so that his crew could refer his usual to divert Gorbachev to Moscow or Minsk?

Unfortunately, the cruelty of chance also lies at the heart of the centuries of mistrust between Poland and Russia. The irony of it there is as many as all of us that this tragedy came at a time when, ostensibly, we were finally going to begin to better, more reasonable relations and greater understanding between the two countries.

After 70 years of denial, Russia's leadership of all put yet millionth Stalinism's mass words to admit the truth about the Katyn massacre. In 1940, the KGB slaughtered more than 20,000 British officers, intellectuals, and clergy in the area by Katyn forest in 1940. Indeed, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer himself, invited his Polish counterpart, Donald Tusk, to commemorate the tragedy together.

But Kaczynski, a member of Solidarity in the 1980s who was eager to overthrow the communist regime, was more controlled of the Russian Bear Tusk. He just together his own delegation to visit Katyn, and wondered if the Russians would give him a say. Curiously, no distance were invited.

Minus the glue of the presidential plane (essentially, again, Soviet-made) was advised not to land in the thick fog, either, or perhaps even the president himself, was keen enough to the Russians' willingness to give honest advice. Indeed, they must well have wondered if the cunning ex-KGB man around Putin simply needed to make Kaczynski's fatal commemoration a mockery.

Russian-Polish conjecture and disagreements date back to the 14th century, when Poland was the far greater power. Indeed, the United Duchy of Muscovy was a backwater. As on the Ukrainians, there have been wars, started by both sides, and partitions of Poland executed by the Russians, followed by attempts at "Russification," with the Russian Christian Orthodox Empire trying to convert the "other religions." Unsurprise, "Slow Russians-converted Catholics in Poland.

Then there are the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, which the Poles refused to join, and Marshal Josef Pilsudski's equivalent victory over the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw in 1920. Throughout the interwar years, Poland and the Soviet Union regarded each other as dagger-driven about without interruption.

When Stalin signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, it gave him an opportunity to invade Poland. The Katyn massacre was a direct result, with Stalin ordering the mass murder of Poland's elite so as to decapitate Polish country and thus make it more pliable.

Katyn was also the occasion for the Soviets to break off relations with Poland's wartime government-in-exile in London. Because the Polish lead, its refusal to renounce the Nazis, Stalin refused the Poles of collaborating with the Germans in trying to shift the blame for their crimes onto Russians. Soon after, the idea of establishing occupied regime in Warsaw took root.

Although the Stalinist heirs did not live long (Gorbachev attended Russia in 1941), for Poland there was no easy exit. With Hitler's defeat, Russia again became part of the Russian sphere, this time of Soviet Russia.

But Poland never stopped resisting—and ultimately independence. The rise of Solidarity in the 1980s was the earliest and most severe blows to the surprising Soviet system. The Polish Pope John Paul II accomplished the anti-communist "threat" that Poland now posed to the Soviet Union. The Pope's call for religious freedom echoed the world, including Russia, where Orthodox believers—and Orthodox bishops—the strong way.

Indeed, throughout the 20th century, mistrust is between Poland and Russia emanated in fierce pitch, manifested not only in politics but into culture. Films, of course, dominated an old problem, too. Alexander Pushkin, Maxim Gorpel and Fyodor Dostoyevsky were all inspirations of the Poles, calling them "wild," "devout" and "intemperate." And Poland's reliance on slavery on the side of the Slavs, rather than attending with them the Soviet brothers. Indeed, "Pushkin's friendship with artist Mickiewicz ended in acrimony over the 1830 Polish insurrection against Tsarist rule.

In fact, the animosity ran so deep then when both countries were no longer communist, and Russia was looking to reinvent itself. The Bolshevik Revolution lobbied, it came up with love 4, the anniversary of the Russian heroic victory in 1612 over Polish King Sigismund III, then lived on square of Moscow.

Now there is talk, in both Warsaw and Moscow, that the unusual tragedy of Katyn might usher in a new era in bilateral relations. Perhaps so, but as the Polish novelist Stanislaw Jerzy Lec said: "You can draw your eyes to reality, but not to memory."

Project Syndicate

Nina Khrushcheva, author of "Imagining Nabokov: Russia Between Art and Politics," teaches international affairs at The New School and is senior fellow at the World Policy Institute in New York.

'Agra must reverse decision'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ACTING JUSTICE SECRETARY ALBERTO AGRA must reverse the decision freeing nine members of the Ampatuan clan implicated in the Maguindanao massacre. Worse, he has allowed Party-nominated candidates and is a witnesses.

We certainly know what the spoiler of Datu Unsay first for much of her life with the consequences of war, of climate and of hostile social and political circumstances in Mindanao.

"We join the Filipino people, especially the victims' families, in expressing our outrage and disgust at how justice and the rule of law have been subverted, this time by no less than the justice secretary," they said.

We also noted the "diverse right-to-center" leaning of Agra's unilateral decision to set free 2 duty and dismissed suspension, who were involved in the wake of the killings of 57 persons, more than 30 of them media workers, last November.

"Once again, the culture of impunity is asserting itself. Once again, politicians' politics trumps justice and truth," said Lim. "The message is clear: In this administration, it is possible for politics of allies like the Ampatuans, who find themselves in the wrong side of the law, to be absolved of all accountability and responsibility even if their cases are already filed in court."

The only Muslim woman senatorial candidate wondered for what purpose the ever-leading Ampatuans and their equally notorious allies in the Arroyo administration helping the President and her favored candidates achieve electoral victory in Maguindanao in the face of national revolt. Could it be to give a boost to the chances for victory of Bikoy Salilia, who is suspected of being the Ampatuans' "real" candidate for governor?

Lim concluded: "The Maguindanao Massacre case is an issue of human rights, justice and human decency. Agra's unilateral decision reduces it to an electoral issue. The 57 victims do not deserve this. Neither do their families and loved ones. Have they forgotten so soon the cruelty done to you? Agra has no business prompting the court's decision; he should reverse his decision."

UNDER Batas Lim, together with the LP's Dr. Marisa Bautista and Bangon Pilipinas' Kaka Inumerable, yesterday joined the list of senatorial candidates endorsed by a group of reproductive health advocates on the basis of their support for reproductive health and family planning positions.

The three were not included in the original list "since we did not have full knowledge of their stance on the issue" but were later included, after their positive responses to a dialogue yesterday, Ramon Bagatsing, executive director of the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), said.

The other pro-RH senatorial candidates who are being endorsed by the group are Juan Miguel Zubiri, Jamby Madrigal, Francis Escudero, Raffine Chiz Escudero, Pia Cayetano, Miriam Defensor Santiago, Bongbong Marcos, Lito Lapid, Loren Legarda, Gilbert Teodoro and Adel Tamano.

"We have chosen these candidates based on the following criteria: authorship of reproductive health bill; media and public pronouncements supportive of reproductive health and family planning, and proven track record in championing these issues and/or in productive legislative bills," Bagatsing said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Eden Bilolagarcia, an NGO leader who is part of the consortium, made could to reproductive health advocates to support these candidates, who despite their Church foes from leaders of the Catholic Church, have remained firm on their stand to fight for the rights of women and to uphold the lives of Filipino from the to poorest."

Bilolagarcia said.

Aside from being an RH advocate himself, Bilolagarcia is the presidential nominee of #votepeopower, a party-list group.

The dialogue with senatorial candidates, dubbed "Facing the Media: A Dialogue with Senatorial Candidates on Population and Reproductive Health," also marked the launching activity for the 6th Annual Population and Development Media Awards, which is open to print, broadcast and new media practitioners.

PROGRESSIVE employment proposals are certain to take to the long struggle to end poverty and give many Filipinos from chronic hunger. The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) presents jobs for out-of-school youth through the Out-of-School Youth Serving Towards Economic Progress (Oscar) Program, which is part of the Accelerated Bongoy Mitigation Program of the Arroyo administration implemented by the MMDA, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the Philippine National Police.

Through Oscar, the MMDA provides out-of-school youth with a set amount of money that these would in the entire operations of the agency. Beneficiaries go through training to skilled workers Along carpentry, masonry, gardening, electronics, landscaping and plumbing as well as clerical and technical support skills. Last year, 3 years of 1,041 members Oscarized workers were hired by the MMDA, with over 1,000 jobs starting to be filled.

One of the Oscar workers is Christopher Solidar, 20. While other than the reported "90%" he was jobless when a friend told him about the MMDA program. He got the job and now earns the daily wage of P274.50 a day. He says, is enough to support him, his wife and how children. He says he is happy in his job, as it gives him the opportunity to practice what he learned in an employment training institute organized. Solidar.

The MMDA said the agency plans to train more up the 4,000 Hunger Task Force directed by President Arroyo to implement the AMBP.

Flag of our fathers

LOOKING BACK

Anthony D. Cerezo

DID FLAG IS SO COMMON AND PRESENT everywhere that we used to take it for granted. How many old and tattered flags do you see every day? Rev. Salvador M. Bendito goes around with flags in the trunk of his car so that when he sees a flag that needs to be replaced, usually in government buildings or schools, he changes it right away and asks the person in charge why the symbol of the state, the symbol of the country is treated as shabby. He often gets a sheepish grin and the lame excuse that they have no budget for flags, to be told that the old one be brought down and be replaced with a new one.

If I am not mistaken, all government offices have to include flags in their annual budget. Common sense dictates that these offices acquire at least two new flags each year to be hoisted on the dependence Day and Rizal Day. Each flag should unfortunately be removed after at most six months.

When I was a Boy Scout in my elementary years, I was taught to respect the flag and how to raise, lower and fold it. We were even taught how to dispose of an old flag by burning because at any time flags were made of cloth, but with synthetic or manufactured fibers we refrain burning and burying in the ground.

We have a Flag and Heraldic Code of the Philippines (RA 8491) that became law in 1998 and it is acted of revision. It is this law that results in the media frenzy after a the space flight because there is a growing that did not like that the Philippine flag was flown upside down or originally conceived by Jose Rizal in 1898. Those who crafted the law were not mistaken that Rizal flew supposed a mouth for years and arranged it for a hand. It came with other signatures and today that is not the way it is placed or hung today. As a matter of fact, the Philippine flag is the only flag in the world that is different when flown in times of war and when in peace. Likewise, it was the intentional intent, a stated intent to be placed on official functions when Emilio Aguinaldo was in attendance. Lacso was studied

here, in Spanish, so that when we say it in Filipino today, we are not conforming to the "legal and "How do we remember this? We remind the law.

There is a provision in the law that declares the use of the flag on clothing or any form of apparel which I understand the current manufacturers of this province is not according to the framers of the law, in sexual practice it is problematic. One police, military and even our Olympic team sport the flag on their uniforms. Is this legal? I'll ask, how do we remember this? We respect the law.

The flag and anthem are supposed to symbolize our nation, yet we are limited to singing the anthem in Filipino. What if other people in other regions want to have their nationalism and unity in singing the anthem in their respective languages, would this be unlawful? How do we resolve this? We amend the law.

What happens when the symbolism of the present Philippine flag, the symbol of the country is challenged? One of the dominant features of the flag is a yellow sun with eight rays that symbolizes the first eight provinces to rise in revolt against the tyranny of the Spanish colonizers in 1896. What happens when other nationalities emerge? What about the people of Mindanao who have remained Muslim primarily because they were never conquered by Spain or owned by Spanish culture? What about the Muslims of the Caribbean, in Northern Luzon, who also retain their culture and tradition because they consciously resisted Hispanic influence? These groups,

during the drafting of the 1986 Constitution, moved for a change in the flag to include a constant moves for the Muslim motifs and, a burning sun for the northern peoples. Their petition was rejected not only for aesthetic reasons but on the grounds that the symbolism of the flag was determined by the founding fathers when they declared independence from Spain in June 1898. What about the long debate on the addition of a sixth ray to the sun in our flag?

If Mendoza read the 1899 Declaration of Independence, they will be surprised and disappointed to find out that the Philippine flag was actually made from the flag of the United States of America under whose benevolent protection the founding fathers sought assistance? History further tells us that when Emilio Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines to find out that the end of the 19th century, the ally had become an enemy. Also speaking the Philippine movement who that to this day is still considered a true hero in northern history. Some textbooks mention the Filipino-American War to portray some sinister motives on their part.

Sometimes I wonder if I should stop asking too many questions and not give opening presidential one of secrets. Maybe I should just take in everything that has been passed down to us from childhood as true.

If something as basic as our flag can produce so many questions, so many different ways of seeing and understanding it, perhaps we should rethink the way we see ourselves as a nation. "Sorry, boss, sorry ulos" was a musical line slogan. Maybe the time-up is somebody is approaching our definitions of islands and peoples before we imagine ourselves as a nation. History is often problematic when it is used as a handbound to silent thinking.

Comments are welcome: write Rizalbook, Box Rizal.

Herd instinct

I WAS DRIVING OVER TO SEE A friend when he called me on my cell phone. With a tone of urgency he told me to postpone the visit by about an hour. When I asked why, he explained there was a "traffikal" of unprecedented proportions in front of his neighborhood and he didn't want me to be "ambushed."

Now the anthropologist (and journalist?), I decided to drive right near the hustle zone and find out what was going on as I approached my friend's home. I wondered if he wasn't exaggerating.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

My friend lives in a middle-class area. Even without gates and guards, the neighborhood doesn't have too many outsiders except for occasional itinerant vendors. That day, however, the neighborhood was literally in an uproar. There must have been about 50 of the homeowners, going around in groups of three to five each, with dogs chasing and barking after them.

I parked my car and watched them. These were residents who responded to the dreadlocks or knocks on doors by letting the intruders in. Other residents were alert, and you could tell that because they were literally barricaded behind come up with some excuse to turn the intermediate away. In still other cases, the intermediate would stand by the gate, waiting for nothing.

I called my friend and said I was parked in front of his house and he laughed. "Mikael, he quips. They might know it on your car." Then he said that it would be safer if I was going on my doorbell. I'm not answering until they're all gone."

As I stood in the car, listening to drift (appropriately, another evangelical undertaking) and getting down some ideas for a column, not about (notoriously) until but about the herd instinct among Filipinos.

Ethnologists, ethologists

Ethologists are people who study animal behavior and they have long noted the herd instinct and herd behavior among many animal species, the animals moving along, "doing" things as one big group, almost like automated robots.

The main explanation for herd behavior is that it increases the chances of survival. There's safety in numbers, certainly, and in times of a crisis or emergency, moving as one big group can be useful so they can fight or flee together, in a split second. In animals, it's been observed that there will always be a few "dissenting" individuals, but they will get swept along in the large herd and soon end up joining it.

Ethologists look at animal while ethnologists are anthropologists who look at what people do. But ethnologists have borrowed as well from ethologists, intrigued by herd behavior among humans which has been observed in all kinds of situations, from political rallies and religious gatherings to mass lynchings having to do with suspected child snatchers.

The Philippines would be a paradise for an ethnologist (and ethologist) who wants to specialize in herd behavior. Just spend time in the streets and you'll find many examples. The intermediary herd was just one example. Look at the street vendors, including the ones weaving in and out of traffic, and you will see that they also display a herd-like mentality with many similar products. Besides the usual fare of cigarettes, candies, water and newspapers, there are "flavors of the month." Whether dogs with nodding heads, aluminum wash cans, plastic bonsai plants, you find vendors selling the same products.

Something similar happens with door-to-door ambulant vendors. A few weeks back, I noticed in the streets close to where I live a group of ambulant vendors going around selling just one kind of plant. They kept on with this every day for about two weeks.

Marketing in groups had its rationale in the past. In many olden times of the world, you still have clusters of streets, each specializing in a particular product. Remember "Sandoval Street" in the old quarters, for example, for such items (sometimes just a lane) specializing in one commodity: pillows, medicinal plants, even coffins. In part that was because the artisans belonged to guilds, and lived close to each other. Many of the guilds overlapped with kinship systems as the "hereditary" nature of many guilds meant not just the goods and crafts but fellow artisans and kin.

Today's herd marketing seems to be based on eschewing the buyers by displaying as many sellers as possible. But this situation tests a almost always overdone in the Philippines. Last year during a major Egyptian trade mission led by the public marketing was thought out and family, all public politicians and executives began to buy until the number of vendors. Every few minutes we would be approached by one or several of the vendors, selling the same kind of material, with the same business pitch. "Sir, ma'am, few more times for one hundred." We eventually cut short our marketing rather than have to deal with the same products.

The same phenomenon happens in other settings, department stores for example. Notice that if you ask about an item, you start to draw other store clerks as well and sometimes end up with five or six of them, pushing you to buy (and giving all kinds of conflicting information).

The problem with our crowd vendors and consumers is that they are hard to sell, and end up wasting a lot of time and money. Even when a sale is made, it becomes less cost-effective because too many vendors were deployed, such that ending up with a tiny share, or none at all.

Buyer herds

Modern marketing relies more on creating herds of buyers. Modern advertising, for example, tries to get ordinary people interested in check out their products. Some (and sometimes several), they put up booths to attract people to look at their stuff. Those who do buy as well as those who don't buy but check out the products, then tell their friends about the product, creating a sense that everyone for the new gadget or is about to get one. The herd instinct, plus also the other psychological factors operating like scarcity and uniqueness, for example—are powerful push factors in buying.

With elections around the corner, you might want to think, too, of how politicians try to use herd marketing to get your vote, from rounding up huge crowds for their campaign caravans to their use of "survey" results to create bandwagon effects during their trading. We have a choice in the way we choose—do not vote as a herd, or do not vote as thinking individuals!

Corrections: In Wednesday's column I mentioned people's prejudice against people with epilepsy and that "the incidence of epilepsy is only 1 per 1,000 people." I meant to say 1 epileptic in 1,000 people. Sorry for the error.

And to Earth Day tip: Do you know what makes cotton balls grow faster? Put a few pounds (used beans) around the base of the tree. They're great in plant fertilizers, being high in nitrogen. At home, you might want to recycle your coffee grounds as well, not for the garden, instead of throwing them out as trash.

Email: mtan@inquirer.com.ph

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New trial-and error game?

I AM GLAD THAT OUR BELOVED COUNTRY IS going to have its first automated polls which could mean, if not totally wipe out, election fraud. The senate then the members of sensing for the final election results declaring the winners will be on to three days (according to reports, though I think the results can be declared after two days).

Unfortunately this experiment is beginning to be clouded with serious doubts. The possibility of Pimentel Count Optical Scan (POST) machines failing (like in Maguindanao where machines overheated during a demonstration, after 30 minutes of use) and with the Commission on Elections itself saying there could be a failure of automation too, definitely, no failure of elections tell us that there is a reason to feel uneasy about what could happen in the May 10 elections. I say this because it's said the automated election is being treated like a newly introduced game that is open to trial and error on the very day of the balloting: if there will be a failure of automation, there will be spare machines, or in the worst scenario, the Comelec is ready for manual counting.

If this is what's to happen—which I hope not—heaven help us.

—JESSA DELA PEÑA,
jessalibardipen@yahoo.com.ph

Exemplary decency in MVP's admission of mistake

DON'T DEFEND TO YOU OUR SINCERETHE greeting of peace!

This is the first time I would be writing an editor of a major daily, but I would not let the current trial by the court of a well-loved columnist, Dr. Emmanuel Pelaez, Dr. Manuel V. Pangilinan or MVP as we fondly call him, come to pass without the best knowing that amid all these, career-manager the master gentleman of this man who has always been known to give flesh to the rights of the Constitution, John Chalis, set route (knowledged and virtue 3 times).

While this unfortunate incident is sure of its past, valuable lessons learned from this should not be forgotten. When mistakes are committed, there should be owned up to and full responsibilities of their consequences should be taken. MVP's actions of owning his mistake and taking full responsibility for it manifest for us not only the decency but also the integrity and Christian character that should define our total person and celebrities. Indeed, if all of us, especially our leaders, can do what MVP did, we can end the cancers of corruption in our society and create a true Christian society. Best of all, it is hoped that this act occurrence be remembered by how its main characters has so admirably handled a controversy, coming up bruised, yes—but definitely much strengthened, untainted and as to grace.

The Bordas community has never been proud of MVP for his uncompromising personal integrity and who has always stood in accordance to what is our proper and Christ like, regardless of personal consequences that Bordas College was his first "personal home" and it will always be proud of him for this. We salute MVP that the Bordas spirit of brotherhood, belongingness and love will remain to be the defining characters of our highest regard and respect for him.

Therefore, allow me enough time in order to reassure MVP that in all his struggles and bruises, for his Bordas College family treasures him, with a genuine love and admiration that only deeper unity every passing day. He wins on our unflinching support for him especially this big fight ahead of him.

—MANUEL V. DE ROSAS, DBE,
nurse-president, San Beda College,
4301 E. Rodriguez Sr.,
1900 San Miguel, Manila

Usual rifts between local chiefs and councils

THIS REFERS TO THE NEWS REPORT ABOUT the saving of graft suits filed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP) against Governor Jojo Gue Acevedo (Inquirer, April 16, 2010) in the Office of the Ombudsman. The nonexistent allegedly from the governor's failure to get the required SP approval for his administration's projects.

The alleged failure of the provincial executive to consult and/or refer his projects to the SP is not only untrue but a myth propagated by its traitors inside the church and balances mechanism in the provincial government. This stands in the way of attaining real progress and prosperity for the province.

Here in Cabanatuan City, a similar rift recently surfaced between Mayor Bong Vergara and the Sangguniang Panglungsod, when for some reason or another, the latter reportedly refused to give its nod for the former's bona projects. These projects involved the purchase of two parcels of land for the city's mass transport terminal facility (MRF) and the external/relocation of municipal trucks operated permits and terminal/place numbers.

Slighted and offended, the Sangguniang Panglungsod came out with resolutions declaring the mayor persona non grata and ordering the arrest and detention of the mayor and his cohorts.

If not resolved, the brewing disharmony between Mayor Vergara and the city council would not do good for Cabanatuan, which in 2007 was named each chosen by the Asian Institute of Management (DOM) as one of the nation's top-performing and competitive mid-sized cities.

To protect and sustain the gains that not city has done for achieved, the Cabanatuan City electorate should in May 10 choose as leader who can rally the support of the entire city government machinery toward the administration's programs, projects and priorities.

—PEDRO CRUZ G. BAGNOS,
President, Journalists
for Good Governance
Cabanatuan City

Civilian supporters turning back on Abu Sayyaf

THE ABU SAYYAF GROUP CONTINUES TO spread terror in Basilan island. Last April 12, it assaulted the town of Tipo-Tipo and, in terms of civilians, apparently to settle the partners of terrorists that it still exists and is capable of waging mass murder. The Abu Sayyaf killed soldiers during the attack, but it also suffered several casualties, including one of its top leaders.

Nothing will stop the extinction of the Abu Sayyaf terror group from waging yet another strike on civilian communities. However, the administration clearinghouse can help end the existence if it will come with government forces team and strike at the Abu Sayyaf's hideouts.

Basilan, despite the violence being committed by terrorists, is still a well-developed province where Muslims and Christians have learned to live together and to unite. Basilan is a witness to not a few inter-marriages between Muslims and Christians.

Sadly though, the Abu Sayyaf's radical and extremist elements, which we know now are al-Qaida inspired, are out to destroy such co-existence. Aided by the so-called last command of the reconciliation forces, they have somehow gained some foothold in Mindanao. The forces promise the nefarious prospect of an independent Moro land. While many have been lured by that promise, the majority of the Moros people want none of it. For one, the government will not allow the country to be dismembered.

The Abu Sayyaf and other terrorist groups of al-Qaida, like the terrorists (remain) islanders, are able to maintain no foothold because they are being rejected and condemned by members of the Moros who are just happy to have establishment of allies who have mastered the art of fabricating improvised explosive devices that they consider important weapons of mass destruction, behind their use. Most weapons to commit mass slaughter of innocent people by using crowds they can control/communities.

Muslim communities are slowly realizing that there will be no future at all for future generations if they continue to harbor the likes of the Abu Sayyaf and foreign terrorists. In fact, there have Outlawries become victims of these nefarious groups whose members they shattered and lived in the past even when food was scarce.

We understand how difficult it is to free themselves from these savages. But in Basilan which was once a terrorist haven, many members of the terror groups have lost their lives because civilian communities have started denying them sanctuaries. The Abu Sayyaf terrorists are on their own. They still manage to abduct businessmen for ransom, but their coffers are dry for many of their funding sources have been identified by the international intelligence apparatus. They are now forced to extort cash on their own to their communities' sorrow. But the more they lose and kill, the more they will likely be exterminated.

—REYES M. REYES,
visa_de_jesus@yahoo.com

Out-of-wedlock child used in Erap campaign

I AM A FILIPINO WORKING ABROAD AND, through the Internet, we are closely monitoring events leading to the 2010 elections. We are still undecided voters. Until recently, we were leaning toward Joseph "Erap" Estrada.

However, after I saw Jinggoy Estrada on television showing off one of his children out of wedlock, I don't think we can support him any further. We cannot support a man who is unmarriageable.

First of all, showing off his child with Laarni Enriquez and allowing her to speak on television about their love child is a violation of the Family Code. Second, by showing the girl our Erap is trying to appeal through the back door to the Filipino voters. Third, recently, we were hearing rumors that Erap's health is deteriorating. Fourth, Erap has been showing off one of his children out of wedlock. I don't think we can support him any further. We cannot support a man who is unmarriageable.

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—MARIA ELISA BARCELO,
emmavivi@gmail.com

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Assistant Editor Tony Ben gonio

Across the NATION

Samar governor's House bid stopped

Comelec finds Tan not natural-born Filipino

By Jove Gobrera
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—A COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (Comelec) division has disqualified incumbent Samar Gov. Milagrosa Tan, who had been suspended as governor previously for a graft case, as candidate for representative of Samar's second district.

The Comelec First Division said in a six-page ruling that Tan was not a natural-born citizen and was ineligible to run for a seat in the House of Representatives.

Respondent Milagrosa Tan Tuazon identified herself as naturalized Philippine citizen and qualified to be a candidate for the position of member of the House of Representatives for the second district of Samar," said the Comelec division ruling.

It was signed by presiding Comelec Commissioner Rene Sarmiento and concurred in by Commissioners Armando Velasco and Gregorio Larrazabal.

Tan, who is on her third and last term as governor, declined to comment, saying her lawyers were studying the case.

The petition to disqualify Tan was filed by two men who claimed to be residents of Samar—Cirilo Gobrey of Paranas town and Oscar Garcia of Catbalogan City.

Since Tan is serving other as governor, her daughter, Sharee Ann, who is incumbent representative, is running in her place as governor of one of the country's poorest provinces.

The Comelec ruling said Section 6 of the 1987 Constitution requires candidates for supreme position to be natural born, not naturalized, Philippine citizens.

According to records that were submitted to the Comelec, Tan's father was a Chinese national while her mother was a natural-born Filipino. Tan was born in Palompon, Leyte. She now lives in Catbalogan City, hometown of her late husband, Ric.

Her father applied for naturalization in 1975, and was issued a certificate of naturalization in 1976; the records said. After obtaining naturalization for himself, Tan's father applied for naturalization for his children, including the governor, the Comelec said.

The Comelec said a photocopy of Tan's Secondary Student's Permanent Record from Colegio de San Francisco Javier could not be deemed sufficient to establish that she was a natural-born citizen.

Tan had been suspended for 90 days on a count of a graft case that she faces for the alleged misuse of the province's calamity funds.

She returned to office after her suspension, but was charged again with another graft case.

Gobrey and Garcia filed separate petitions to disqualify Tan on citizenship grounds.

The Comelec division ruled that there was enough evidence to disqualify Tan.

In Maguindanao, the Comelec also disqualified the scion of a powerful clan, Datu Ashar Mangudadatu, from the mayoral race in Datu Montawal town.

Mangudadatu lost, Datu Montawal, sought the disqualification on the basis of residency.

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North Luzon leaders give backing to Binay

DAGUPAN CITY—POLITICAL leaders from Northern Luzon on Tuesday declared their support for Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay, giving him the anointed shot in the arm to cement his vice-presidential bid.

Former antiquerenta aide Marcelino Primicias Gozo, who was elected the meeting host, was assisted the meeting host was assisted by Pangasinan governor Amado Espino Jr. and Mr. Perueiro, said that they were pushing for Binay because, she said, he would make a good vice president.

"Mayor Binay really came from the poor. But he doesn't see it as a campaign tool," Gozo said, referring to the political campaign ad of Binay.

"We decided that we are going to have a united front that will push for Jejomar Binay only. They'll have to choose their own presidential and vice-presidential candidates," Gozo said.

Nonetheless, Binay's friend and campaign coordinator in Pangasinan, cited the united front was created just a consensus (Child of the Scribe), however, he noted, it is only fitting when it from northern Luzon among the vice presidential candidates. Binay is on Boxing from Cabagan town in Isabela.

Gozo also said that former Pangasinan Gov. Oscar Orbos and his network of friends, relatives and supporters in the province were also supporting Binay's vice presidential bid.

Orbos, a known ally of LP standard-bearer Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, said his support for Binay was "personal and undivided," as he had known Binay as a friend and ex-work-out Enemy family.

Binay has placed third in both Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia surveys but Gozo said Binay still has a big chance of clinching the vice presidency because of the increasing number of undecided voters.

—Gaillard Ravelbuenio, Inquirer Northern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

■ BACOLOD CITY

Ex-Benguet gov dies

FORMER BENGUET Gov. Raymundo Medalen died of kidney complications at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday, Herman Bill.

He is survived by wife Lydia and children Ramon Paul, Jeffrey, Raymund Medalen Medalen served as director of the National Irrigation Administration for Cordillera from 2000 to 2004. He was Benguet governor from 2004 to 2007.

Medalen was one of the founders of the ancestral Ashely Gathering Festival in Kabayan, Benguet. His body lies at the family house in La Trinidad, Benguet.

—Jonell Medo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ PAMPANGA

Among Ed in a music video

APRIL 23 Filipino and young people supporting re-election of Gov. Ed Del Pueblo have become very involved in the campaign.

Aug Ibrs Ilaw a music video of a new jingle for the Pampanga candidate for good governance.

Composer-choreographer Andy Abad and crowd of amateur performers shoot the music video on Tuesday night, gathering 300 people, including children and elderly folk, at the Brian Z. Baker Convention Center here to sing "Ako-Ako (Together)," the rallying song of the campaign.

Composed by Abad, the song was first heard in public on Feb. 17 when the Commission on Elections announced that its two Board Members Lilia Pineda had won in two recount cases against Pueblo.

"Sing it like this is a victory party," Abad boomed as he coaxed the volunteers.

Clad in white or yellow shirts, they flung their arms in the air, this morning, while swinging the new families refrain, "Ako-Ako Ikaw ang nandyan kapag kailangan. Hanggat ang Pampanga (Let's be everything together for now. I am there when needed. Pampanga will always prosper)."

The first phrase was said by Pueblo on the night the Comelec proclaimed his victory in 2007.

Liberal Party (LP) candidates mixed with the singers have to be reminded to take their energy level. Pueblo, the LP-picked national bet, his running mate Mauro Lubillo, congressional candidates Pet Dumpit and Antonio Campos and other local candidates hobbed over out from the day's campaigning.

—Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

■ TACLOBAN CITY

Dengue cases: 1,000

THE DEPARTMENT of Health (DOH) in Eastern Visayas says that the number of dengue fever cases in the region has now breached the 1,000-mark, making it the highest in the last five years.

Boyd Cesis, regional sentinel nurse, said as of Friday last week, the region has 1,401 dengue fever cases with 11 deaths. The victims were children, the youngest a month-old and the oldest, a five-year-old.

Cesis said the highest DOH recorded cases came when the typhoon season comes.

—Joey Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas

■ LAGUNA

Noy told: Don't be US puppet

SAN PABLO CITY—Presidential (Kampi) candidate Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III should never feel threatened by efforts of some American officials to start war with the Liberal Party when elected president, a group said.

"We hope that Senator Aquino will not be Arroyo's American boy," said Bayanga in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

Bayanga is a former chairman of the PIP-US Visiting Forces Agreement.

Aquino was reported to have talked with American officials, including former ambassador Kristie Kenney.

"Senator Aquino is already flattered that he is being contacted by ambassadors of the US (both Obama administration), as if he received a friendship kiss," said Bayanga.

"Anyway, to take it that if he wins, he will prove to be another Philippine president unwilling and unwilling to the wishes and demands of the US?"

—Kevin Lucius, Inquirer Southern Luzon

PANGILIO

OCAMPO

RMN PUBLIC SERVICE

RMN'S Final Survey: Aquino maintains lead, Villar 2nd and Estrada a strong 3rd

IN VP RACE, ROXAS IS STILL AHEAD FOLLOWED BY LEGARDA AND BINAY

Sen. Noynoy Aquino continues to lead over Sen. Manny Villar and former President Joseph Estrada in the upcoming presidential elections based on the Tele Radio Broadcasting Radio Listener Survey conducted last April 12, 2010.

With twenty three weeks left before the elections, Aquino garnered 44.1% in Mega Manila, followed by Estrada with 25.2% and Villar with 19.8%.

For the rest of Luzon, Villar got 28.6%, Aquino 19.3% while Gilbert Teodoro had 9.4%. In the Visayas region, Aquino had a substantial lead with 44.9% compared with Villar's 20.4% and Teodoro's 7.3%. Aquino also emerged at top in Mindanao with 31.8% followed by Estrada with 23.8 and Villar 20.4%.

In the vice presidential race, Sen. Mar Roxas kept his lead in most areas in the country and was followed by Gov. Loren Legarda and Jejomar Binay.

The survey, which is part of Tatak RMN, Radyo Mo Nationwide campaign to deliver responsive public service, covered 20 cities in the country. More than 4,000 randomly selected respondents were asked in face to face interviews who they would vote for if the elections were held today. This result is the last of a three-part study.

Amid outages, Davao folk pay more for power

DAVAO CITY—BUSINESSMEN, who have been complaining of revenue losses due to the daily six-hour outages in Davao del Sur, are expected to raise a howl of protest anew.

On Wednesday, the Davao del Sur Electric Cooperative (Davesco) announced that it was increasing power rates by about P1.66 per kilowatt hour in the province, which has a population of 622,406.

Jesus dela Victoria, Davesco manager, immediately explained that the increase was not a decision of the cooperative, but was ordered by National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP), a private company which took over power distribution from National Power Corp.

"We are not going to profit from the increase because it will directly go to the NGCP," Dela Victoria said. "We will not increase if we did not implement the increase because NGCP will bill us for it anyway."

The increase, from P5.87 per kWh to P6.95 per kWh, was reflected on the account of consumers starting yesterday.

Dela Victoria said the new charge was actually a pass-on rate.

A businessman said increasing rates at the time the entire was losing revenue could force small investors to close shop.

"Many businesses dependent on electricity here already lost nearly 365 percent of their operations. Owners fail to pay rentals, taxes and labor cost. With the increase, do you think they can still survive?" a weeping shop owner said.

Nino Davin, a homemaker, said the increase was ill-timed because the power outages were already a burden.

"What should we do now? We are paying higher despite the long period of brownouts," she said.

Power industry officials blamed the outages on the sharp decline in water levels in hydroelectric power sources in Mindanao as a result of the El Niño phenomenon.

Despite the sad experience with hydroelectric power sources, however, some officials of the government said most hydroelectric power plants were likely to be built in Mindanao.

Some electric cooperatives have drilled an order by NGCP to implement brownouts despite the cooperatives relying on geothermal sources of electricity that were not affected by the El Niño phenomenon. Yolanda Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao

LINEMEN from a Davao power line contractor doing dusk jobs despite daily outages in the area. Water levels in hydroelectric power sources in Mindanao have fallen drastically, forcing the outages. Some businessmen, however, believe the power situation was being deliberately manipulated to justify the upcoming increase in coal power plants. BAU DACALOS, CARLOS H. CONJUANCO

Ecija harvest good, but farmers complain

CABANATUAN CITY— JUST IN Nueva Ecija is beautiful but farmers are decrying the low buying price of palay and the supposed collusion between rice mill owners and traders to further bring prices down.

Amid the festive, provincial-agricultural celebration, the buying price offered by traders has gone down to P11.20 to P12.50 a kilogram, from P14 a kg at the start of the harvest season.

He said while the volume of harvest for hybrid rice is produce of two genetically different parent plants was higher compared to the inbred lowland rice varieties, traders regard it as an inferior in quality.

He said the harvest for hybrid rice was for seven 1 ha and 220 cavans or more per hectare. The volume for inbred variety, on the other hand, averaged 120 cavans a hectare.

THE PAGSAY Dam in Ramon, Isabela, is riddled with mud cracks resembling those in a scorching desert as water levels plunge way below its normal level at 183 meters. ALVIN KASIBANG/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Price manipulators

Santos said rice traders could be behind the sudden drop in the buying price of palay.

He said since many provinces had less harvest because of the onslaught of the El Niño phenomenon this year, some traders would buy harvest in Nueva Ecija at lower prices and sell them at higher prices when they were milled.

Santos also said he had received complaints from farmers that traders were classifying hybrid rice as inferior compared to inbred rice.

This is the reason traders offer a lower buying price for hybrid varieties, he said.

"Of course it is not true that the hybrid rice is inferior to quality than the inbred rice," he said. "It could be just a ploy to force the farmers to sell their hybrid rice at a much lower price."

NFA's mandate

Santos said he asked officials of the National Food Authority (NFA) in the province to buy the farmers' harvest.

The government buying price for dry and clean palay is P17 a kg. The NFA said it would buy fresh harvest at prices according to the grains' moisture content.

With an increased buying activity by the NFA, Santos said traders would be forced to buy farmers' harvest at a higher price.

An NFA official, in a radio announcement this week, said the agency would buy about 20,000 cavans of palay during the harvest season.

With reports from Joel Locsin, a farmer in the farmer City of Muñoz, said because traders in his area had stopped buying palay, he decided to save the harvest.

"I am spending about 500 per cavan for the labor, land, transportation and other incidental expenses for the drying of my harvest," he said.

Too many documents

He tried to sell his harvest to the NFA but he was told he would need his land title, tax declaration and a certification from the barangay captain that he is a legitimate farmer before he could sell his palay to the agency.

"The NFA is demanding so many documents before you can sell your palay to the agency. I decided not to sell my harvest to the NFA," Bernardo said. Inquirer Region Inquirer Central Luzon

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Villar's trouble with hellos at the SEC, PSE

Front page A1

within the review period of 180 days from the date of initial offering.

Lawyers said this violated article III, part 3, section 7, of the exchange's revised listing rules, which provides for a 180-day lockup on the secondary shares.

Vista Land boasted early in February 2007 to oversee spinoffs of brands old and new: brands: Camella, a listed line, Crown Asia and Brittany, made P14.3 billion from the sale of 2.12 billion primary shares.

Despite a weak showing in early trade, share prices soared to more than the offer price of P4.90, as far as one month as P7.50 per share. Share prices subsequently took a dive and hardly recovered since the secondary offering.

Simply put, Villar wanted the secondary offering held to once, despite the 180-day lock-up rule. He wanted to unload the day, while the market was bullish. And he got it.

180-day lock-up rule

The rule, according to a PSE document obtained by the Inquirer, requires a company to ensure its shareholders owning at least 10 percent of its issued and outstanding capital to enter into an agreement not to sell, assign, or in any manner dispose of their shares within the 180-day period from the listing of the shares.

The 180-day rule effectively put the secondary shares in escrow mainly to allow the public-trading time for primary shares to have their due course, establish the market share of prices, and to prevent the majority stockholders from abandoning the company, which could take place during a secondary offering.

"It is an assurance that the majority stockholders are not selling just because they want to abandon ship and that they want to find jump from it," an SEC lawyer said.

It also allows the SEC to check a company's complete assessment of any legal encumbrances and, if so, if it is worth stopping the public offering.

Vista Villar managed to get his stock dividend issue SEC and PSE lawyers and stockholders. Five of them talked to the Inquirer separately at the height of the controversy surrounding an ethical complaint lodged by Sen. Justice Madrigal against the billionaire senator last year in connection with the multibillion C-5 road diversion compromise.

Lobbying for private business

The trouble with Villar's phone calls, the lawyers said, was that these were "unethical and unprofessional" because he was a high-ranking government official who personally lobbying for his private business interest. "These created so much pressure on the PSE board," a lawyer added.

An initial public offering is often undertaken by younger and smaller companies looking for new capital to fund expansion plans, though some large privately owned companies may also look to enter public trading.

A secondary public offering is an opportunity to welcome new investor into the company but more importantly, it gives the selling shareholders the chance to cash in on their holdings with minimum tax payments.

This is allowed, but the shareholders need to observe the 180-day lock-up period after the initial offering.

The PSE confirmed the application of Vista Land for initial listing on May 24, 2007, subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions, among which was compliance with article III of its revised listing rules.

Terms sheet

As indicated in their signed offer terms sheet, the selling shareholders (or the Villars' holding companies) namely, Adelfa, and Polar offered to the public a total of 3,265,000,000 Vista Land's secondary shares.

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IN THE KNOW

Villar Vista Land's assets total P43.2B

MRS. MAMIE VILLAR'S Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) in 2009 showed he owned 99.99 percent of Adelfa Properties Inc. and 97.38 percent of First Properties Inc.

Combined, both firms own more than half (50.1 percent) of Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc., according to the Philippine Stock Exchange. Adelfa owns 23.0 percent of Vista Land's outstanding stock while First Properties owns 28.2 percent.

Vista Land was incorporated on Feb. 28, 2007, as an investment holding company. It operates through four distinct business units: Brittany Corporation, Camella Homes, and Camella Communities. The business units are involved in various real estate development projects for the low-cost housing segment to the high-end market offering luxury homes.

Vista Land and its subsidiaries' projects include Portofino, Crosswinds, Malibu Point, Pinehills, Tierra Monte, Dasmariñas Residences, Wedgewood and Plantacion Monticello.

The company had total assets of P43.2 billion in 2009.

In March this year, Vista Land said it was allotting P10 billion to launch 30 projects for 2010, bringing its total inventory portfolio to a total of 107. The projects cover 19 provinces and 46 cities and are in 54 portfolio nationwide.

Vista Land's board of directors consists of Manuel C. Mendoza (chair), Reuperanio Marcos B. Jimenez, Cynthia J. Javarez, Manuel Paolo Villar, Mark Villar, and independent director Nelson G. Bautista and Martin O. Aday. Its officers are from the executive and chief executive officer, treasurer, and Manuel Paolo, chief financial officer, Manuel Paolo and Mark are Villar's sons. *Inquirer Research*

Source: Sec. Manny Villar's Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN), Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc. official website, Securities and Exchange Commission and Philippine Stock Exchange.

Villar made what the SEC lawyers called an "unprecedented" move. Along with Presidents Lim, Villar went to the SEC board meeting "unannounced and unscheduled" and right there and then, with Lim's help, "made a pitch for a relaxation of the 180-day lock-up period for Vista Land," which was "a first," he added.

"Villar came here striving to get his wish," the lawyer said. "He wanted Chair Lim and the SEC board to meddle the rules."

The five-person SEC board rejected Villar's request. "The decision was made because there were a number of strike DOS during the period and they did not want to lend a hand significantly," the SEC lawyer said.

"The lockup is essentially a sign of identity of the original owners," he said. "The rule not allowing the original stockholder to would prevent them from taking advantage of high prices in the market just for the moment and would not be benefended."

Quick PSE decision

Under its rules, the SEC can give "exemptive" relief which is an "instruction" procedure.

The SEC lawyers said they called on the PSE to refer the SEC's market regulation department for it to refer the exemption to the SEC on time. However, Villar made a decision before the market was bullish.

The lawyer said that to his knowledge, no exemption had been granted to anyone, or at least in the last four years.

The SEC disapproved proposal Lim, according to a PSE lawyer, to call for an "emergency meeting" of the PSE board several days before the offering to address Villar's predicament.

"Three at the meeting, Jesus Villar threw the weight around and tried to push the arm of the PSE board to get his wish," the lawyer said.

"Anyway, you don't always follow your rules," the lawyer quoted Villar as telling the board. "Why can't I get an exemption? Magbabayad naman kayo (you'll pay) just help each other's."

Shocked PSE board

It was rare, according to the lawyer, that Lim had called for an unscheduled meeting. It was even rarer that a person, especially that from Senate President of the stature of Villar, appeared to request, nor made to appear before the board to argue his case, he added.

At least two PSE board members—Eusebio Tanco and Alejandro Yu—expressed shock and dismay over Villar's overture, during the meeting, according to the lawyers.

The lawyers tried to reach Tanco and Yu, but were told that they wouldn't want to talk about it publicly, citing the exchange's Code of Conduct, the demands of rapid decision.

Some PSE lawyers tried to dissuade the PSE board from granting Villar's wish.

"Such secondary shares are normally held to ensure continuance in the lock-up requirement discussed in the firm's favor. The offer period is expressed on July 16 to 20, 2007, which is within the review period," the document said.

By allowing Villar to break the rules," the PSE document added, "the reputation of the exchange, particularly the consistent and reasonable application of the rules, may be questioned if the said request will be granted."

Despite the SEC disapproval, the PSE and Vista Land, then still looking to IPO-mark record, went ahead with the secondary offering.

"There are a number of ways to skin a cat," said a leading SEC official when asked how this was done. While the SEC approves by rules and exemptions from it, he added, the PSE is a self-regulatory body.

Lim's side

In a statement e-mailed to the Inquirer, Lim said the secondary shares offered under Vista Land's follow-on offering was not part of the shares that were the subject of the 180-day lock-up.

"It is important to point out that the Vista Land offering was not an initial public offering being by way of introduction. The PSE relies on listing by introduction contemplates that the company to be so widely held as possible to the investing public," he said.

"The PSE Board's approval of the listing application namely introduction rule or listing by introduction. This rule requires the applicant company to conduct a public offering of its shares within one year following the listing by introduction," he added.

But Lim didn't explain why Villar had to personally see SEC officials to push for his wife's application.

Lim seemed drawn between repeated requests for an interview to clarify other questions.

$2 billion in foreign orders

On July 1, 2007, Vista Land went on a road show to attract foreign buyers in Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States and London. The road shows were successful. Many foreign investors bought into the secondary offering, according to Vista Land president Ang Santos.

Of the total offering, 70 percent was allocated to foreigners, while the rest was sold to ordinary Philippine investors, Santos said.

Foreigners snapped up shares of Vista Land during its offer period, generating $2 billion in foreign orders. The company had UBS Investment Bank as sole global coordinator and bookrunner with eight years underwriters as co-lead managers while BDO Capital and Investment Corp. was the lead domestic underwriter.

Because share prices took a dive and had hardly recovered to its highs since the secondary offering, a lead broker said, some minority stockholders cried concerns to BOD, but because they were not organized, nothing came out of it.

Likewise, because of Villar's taxpayer use at the PSE, the scheduled public offering of other companies either was delayed or canceled, the lawyer added. "By breaking the rules, Vista Land was allowed to break the line."

By tradition and rules, the PSE lawyers said, the corporate body never allowed public offering of secondary shares and primary shares simultaneously or a few days apart.

Look who's calling

They recalled the public offerings of equally prominent companies such as Metro Pacific Investments Corp. and Bloomberry Resorts Corp., all of whom were made to follow the same rules. Metro went public in November 2006, Belo in August 2004.

"The lock-up rule has been one of the symbols for the necessity of the majority shareholders to hold on to their shares," a lawyer said. It has been respected and observed by all companies that have listed," the PSE document said.

At SEC lawyer tried to rationalize Villar's overtures, saying that SEC officers many with doctorate degrees "would not shy either following up papers or lobbying, a favorable response for their businesses from the regulatory body.

"It's some kind of a routine," the lawyer said. "We get calls from my Tom, Dick and Harry each day. They are free to do that. It's no big deal. It's a different story if they ask us to do something illegal. But we do what is just and right here. If you can't stand the pressure, you shouldn't be here."

The PSE lawyer thought otherwise.

"Senator Villar was our just my Tom, Dick, and Harry here," he said. "He was the Senate President."

(See Villar's comment)

Erap, JPE accuse Manny of pressuring PSE on stock sale

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the lock-up period in violation of stock exchange rules. (See banner story)

"It's not fair that when he is still not the President, how much more if he is already the President of this country?" Estrella said at a news conference of the campaign headquarters of former President Joseph Estrada's PMP in Mandaluyong City.

"It's like the type of person that the country should install as the next President of the Philippines?" he added.

Prohibition

The lock-up requirement is a prohibition on all listings and public offerings of shares of stock of private companies.

It prohibits major shareholders like the Villars from selling their shares within a certain period to protect small shareholders from the devaluation of the shares available to trade.

"In simple terms, those who want to generate funding for their companies by selling their shares to the public are prohibited from selling so-changing their shares within a certain period because such selling, but the price or value of the listed shares, this subsidy enriching the majority shareholders at the expense of and to the detriment of the public," Estrella said.

Villar at PSE meeting

Estrella presented minutes of a meeting conducted PSE meeting in 2007 and a letter of PSE chair Hans Sicat to point of his allegations against Villar. Sicat joined the PSE board and became its chair only last year.

The minutes showed that Villar's son-in-law Mark Villar attended the meeting on June 29, 2007, when the board approved the release of 20.26 percent of his shares. Estrella said it was Villar himself who requested to endorse with the PSE directors.

"From the record of all these meetings, there is no evidence that my stakeholder Sen. Manuel Villar himself lobbied and exerted pressure to unbound the approval of his family-owned company's request for exemption to enable him and his family to sell their shares which were otherwise subject to lockup at a hefty premium," Estrella said.

Veiled threat

"Now, I understand what he said when he told me that he raised P5 billion when he sold his own shares of stock and that he would use the money for his campaign. It seemed out that there was manipulation and a breaking of the lock-up rule of the (PSE)," added the owner-operator earlier said.

Estrella said he sought an explanation last month from the PSE board about Villar's investment. He said he received information that shareholders had also violated the rules.

"That remark, I understand, assailed the character of a retired director or members of the PSE board, and it caused the resignation of the approval of requested exemption from the lock-up provision of the PSE rules," Estrella said.

He said a member of the PSE board confirmed the veracity of the story, "but it is basically simple clarification and information through my letter to the members of the PSE board," he added.

Request approved in 1 hour

Estrella said the PSE approved Villar's request on the same morning that he presented "a short background on their application, because a portion of restricted shares."

The PSE statement said Estrella said that PSE minutes showed that Villar's previous, the PSE "concur" that till included Villar, the various questions raised by local regulatory agencies of Vista Land's request all answered to "just your satisfaction."

"The PSE [board's] unconciliation was done with such alacrity that made me wonder if they did it out of sheer efficiency and brilliance, or out of awe or the presence of no less than Hon. [then] President of the Senate," Estrella said.

OFW's taken advantage

Estrella, who opposed the move underwriter with his own businesses, said Villar took advantage of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) by "reward" his political personnel to gain profits. Many of the buyers of Villar's property developments are migrant workers, he said.

Estrella urged Villar to respond to this and other allegations separately.

Undisclosed income

Estrella believed that Villar could be held accountable for his failure to declare his earnings from the proceeds of the public listing.

"[The] issue of Manuel Villar et al Congresswoman Cynthia Villar does not appear in the information or memorandum or in the prospectus and in documents related to the public offering of Vista Land," Estrella said.

"But he is saying that he said his spouse earned P15 billion from the public offering," he added.

"Is this the reason why this is not declared in the 2007 and 2008 statements of assets, liabilities and net worth?" Estrella asked.

Estrella said that if Villar could be proven to be overspending in the presidential campaign period, he could be the subject of disqualification proceedings.

He noted that his counsel consultations of Senator Loren Legarda's campaign with the then Senate President Villar in 2007, the latter admitted that he raised P15 billion from the public offering of Vista Land shares.

"In all of their years? Vacation? Sales? Another campaign library?" Estrella asked. "Villar et al. are to be asked about Vista Land's international road shows."

P5 billion personal use

He said Villar told him that P15 billion would go to his campaign, while P5 billion would be for his personal use.

"That's what I would use for my campaign," Estrella quoted Villar as saying.

Other corporations have already followed Villar's example, according to Estrella.

Above board

The PSE said Vista Land had complied with the listing and public offering requirements of the exchange based on its records in 2007.

The Vista Land offering was done subsequent to its listing by way of introduction, wherein allows a company to list its shares without conducting an initial public offering.

PSE rules encourage and, in certain cases, require the applicant company to conduct a public offering of its shares within one year following the listing by introduction.

It is important, the PSE said its board earlier approved the public offering of Vista Land and in a subsequent meeting in 2007 announced that the lock-up rule would not apply to the sale by existing shareholders covering less than 10 percent of the total outstanding capital of the company at the time of the offering of their shares as part of the public offering following a listing by introduction.

"The PSE is committed to the development of the capital markets of our country and implements its mandate to protect the interest of its stakeholders and the investing public," Sicat said.

Documentary tax

Other stockbrokers said that at the time of Vista Land's application, the PSE was just about to implement the Lifeline Law, which removed the documentary stamp tax to reduce transaction cost.

Shares of Vista Land rounded by 3 percent to close at P5.48 per share yesterday in trade, contrast to the generally upbeat stock market trading.

Based on yesterday's close, Vista Land had a market capitalization of P28.56 billion and a public ownership of 32 percent. *With a report from Boris C. Dumlao*

'Vista Land should answer issue, not me'

From page A1

quality of the sale of his shares, Villar urged the media to rely on a press statement issued by Vista Land early in the day.

"The company has already issued a press release on that, and they completely answered all the issues raised," said Villar.

He then challenged Estrada and his camp to bring the issue to the proper forum. "I won't be unduly affected by this kind of story that we deny that," he said.

Rehashed issue

Villar noted that "the allegations have been answered already by Vista Land, which is a private company owned by thousands of stockholders — many of them foreigners — and they are the ones who will answer this issue."

He reminded the media that this was exactly what he meant when he talked, at the start of the campaign, of rehashed and concocted issues to be released by his rivals or installment hate ads throughout the campaign season.

Villar may have held back his punches, but his spokespersons went on the offensive, labelling Estrada and Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile liars.

In a statement, lawyer Sixto Rontos Galang, chief legal officer of Villar, lashed back at Estrada and Enrile for allegedly "peddling lies and deceiving the public regarding the propriety of the stock offering of his real estate company."

He labelled the charges "pure fiction."

She vehemently denied Estrada's accusation that Villar influenced the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) board in June 2007 into approving his request to release almost 20 percent of his own shares in the latter's controlled Vista Land from the lock-up period in alleged violation of stock exchange rules.

Galang said the public offering of the shares of stock of Vista Land was done in compliance with the requirements of the Securities Regulation Code and the rules of the PSE.

She said Estrada and Enrile were "lying through their teeth" when they claimed that Villar had pressured the PSE board to disapprove the public offering of Vista Land stocks.

"For the enlightenment of Mr. Estrada and his Honorable Enrile, the bulk of Vista Land shares, or 80 percent thereof, was taken up by foreign investors. So, how can they claim that Filipino investors were duped by Senator Villar?" she said.

Cleared by SEC, PSE

She disclosed that the public offering was cleared by both the SEC and the PSE.

"There was full disclosure of all material information as required by law. There was no Offering Circular, which not only complied with Philippine legal requirements but also conformed to the international standards and practices," Rontos Galang said.

She added that UBS Investment Bank acted as global coordinator and book runner of the international offering of Vista Land shares, while BDO Capital & Investment Corp. acted as issue manager and domestic lead underwriter.

She added that two reputable Philippine law firms—Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & Delos Angeles and Picazo Buyco Tan Fider & Santos—and two reputable international law firms—Allen & Overy and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom—affirmed the legality of the share offer.

Galang also stressed that the pricing of the shares for purposes of the public offer was arrived at through an international book building exercise that was coordinated by UBS.

Nothing irregular

"While it is true that Senator Villar appeared before the PSE board, there is nothing irregular with the said appearance. PSE listing applicants do that, when deemed necessary in accord the approval of their listing applications," she said.

"The PSE is a private corporation, not a government agency. Senator Villar appeared in his private capacity, as a controlling shareholder of an applicant, not as a government official.

"The lock-up requirement which Vista Land requested the PSE to waive is a requirement under the rules of the PSE, not under any law or regulation. It is well within the power of the PSE to waive any of its rules on just and justifiable grounds. There are Villar's appearance was to explain the circumstances which make the request for waiver just and meritorious," she added.

More important, Galang said the PSE board, in this end, did not grant the requested waiver despite the appearance of Villar.

No waiver by PSE

She said this showed that the PSE board was not influenced, much less pressured, by Villar's appearance before it.

"The PSE Board allowed the release from escrow of the shares of one corporation because the board concluded that those shares were not subject to the lock-up requirement. To reiterate, insofar as the allegations of Mr. Estrada, the waiver was granted by the PSE Board," Galang said.

To date, none of the Villar companies have underlisted underpledge or unpaid obligations to the Big Big or the National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., she said.

"If they are insisting otherwise, they should present documents to the public, the figures of any unpaid loan. If they cannot, they should stop rehashing issues, which have long been answered and settled," said the lawyer.

Galang also categorically denied that Manuela Corp. ever obtained a loan or any credit accommodation from the Government Service Insurance System or the Social Security System.

If Enrile insisted otherwise, he should present documents to support his claim, she added.

Gordon sues survey firms for 'misleading,' seeks damages

From page A1

In a civil complaint before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, the Bagumbuhan party's presidential candidate said the survey firms Social Weather Stations (SWS) and Pulse Asia should be held accountable for their "misleading surveys."

In the last published SWS survey conducted March 19-22, Gordon ranked 5th at 3 percent, in a Pulse Asia survey March 21-28, Gordon ranked 6th at 2 percent, while Eddie Villanueva also got 6th spot, at 2 percent.

SWS and Pulse Asia defended the integrity of their surveys.

SWS survey research and communication specialist Leo Lamata earlier said that "these are our methods be satisfied if we've just received an award from the Gallup World Poll!"

Gallup awards

In February, SWS received its second Gallup World Poll award for Outstanding Commitment to Methodological Rigor. In 2009, it received its first Gallup World Poll award for Outstanding Service and Data Quality for data collected in Asia.

Lamata said the face-to-face survey method that Gordon questioned "is the most accurate of all methods." He said the rest of the points raised in Gordon's complaint would be addressed at a proper forum.

"We reassure the public that Pulse Asia employs scientific methods and aptitude sessions to standards in the conduct of all its surveys and analyses," Ana Maria Tabunda, Pulse Asia chief research fellow, said in a text message.

"Our data collection methods (e.g., face-to-face interviews) are not conducted but are scored to suit populations, a large segment of which has no access to telephones, including cellphones," Tabunda added.

SC upholds surveys

Tabunda said Pulse Asia was still waiting for a copy of Gordon's lawsuit before answering all points it had raised.

The Supreme Court in May 2001 struck down as unconstitutional a provision in the Fair Election Act which bans the publication of surveys days before an election.

"While it is true that surveys are part of our freedom of expression, such freedom is not within limits especially when, as in this case, public interest during election periods warrants that these survey companies at least publish credible and untried survey results," Gordon's lawyer Chito Diaz told reporters.

Diaz said Gordon was not after publicity or monetary compensation in filing the lawsuit.

"We want to establish that the rights of Sen. Gordon were violated through these misleading and false survey results. It's not a publicity stunt," Diaz said.

Gordon was campaigning in Mindanao yesterday.

Another Gordon lawyer, Karlo Tagarda, said: "This lawsuit is also for Gibo Teodoro, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, and for all the rats or candidates who are marginalized because of the unreal accelerating of these surveys."

TRO sought

In his complaint, Gordon claimed that in their campaign outline, he and running mate Nacanieh Fernando continued to be one "heavily underestimated" by the respondents who have expressed eager support" for them.

Gordon asked the court to immediately issue a temporary restraining order against SWS and Pulse Asia to stop them from further conducting and publishing surveys on the May 10 presidential election.

He also urged the court to issue a writ of preliminary injunction that would require SWS and Pulse Asia to cease from conducting such survey results.

Gordon asked for P400,000 in damages, part of which he will donate to the Philippine Red Cross, which he chairs.

"The lack of scientific rigor, professionalism and ethical conduct by the defendants in conducting their pre-election surveys, have damaged ... Sen. Gordon's campaign in that their surveys have forced him to ... waste valuable time and resources to explain his low survey ratings instead of focusing his efforts in communicating his vision ... for the country," the complaint said.

Gordon said he has also allowed his fund-raising activities as fund-raisers express their enthusiasm in heeding the campaign of a purported 'unwinnable candidate.'

Other allegations

Gordon claimed the polling firms refused to disclose the sponsors of the surveys, the methods used and the questions asked.

They "have allowed politicians to ask their own questions in their surveys for approximately P300,000 per question, in addition to their subscriptions fee ranging from P500,000 to P400,000," he alleged.

Gordon said the polling firms should have exercised more caution in conducting surveys, considering that "certain," such as in 2004 where SWS said President Macapagal-Arroyo got 33 percent of Metro Manila votes while rival Fernando Poe Jr. 23 percent.

Gordon said the actual result showed the opposite.

He said the basis in face-to-interview method had been "declared as ... grossly inaccurate by social survey science and reputable pollsters."

Other candidates

The Fair Election Act provision that the Supreme Court struck down provides that surveys affecting national candidates "shall not be published 15 days before an election and surveys affecting local candidates shall not be published seven days before an election."

The COMELEC opposed the ban.

The high court ruled in favor of the SWS, saying the provision "constitutes an unconstitutional abridgement of freedom of speech, expression and the press."

The issue has provided varied reactions from other candidates.

'Fake, for sale'

At a luncheon yesterday with business editors and reporters, Ang Kapatiran Party standard-bearer JC de los Reyes said: "Drilling is not working, when it's used as a tool to get a margin of the sentiment of the general public. The polling outfits are just doing their job."

"The problem arises when media outfits pick up survey results and convey a message to the people. The results of the public not till the survey but it's really how we project all this data to the general public," he said.

De los Reyes said the presentation of survey results becomes a form of mind conditioning when candidates are portrayed by the media as favorable (or) unfavorable (or) unelectable.

Presidential candidate Jamby Madrigal supported Gordon's decision to sue, saying of surveys: "It's not only fake but for sale."

Bonifacio Bilde said he had asked his lawyers to look into Gordon's request to join him in the lawsuit. He said he too believed the surveys had been unfair to him. PCIJ reports Jyoti Jeremiah Aning in Manila, and Jaye Gabieta and Carla Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Sanlakas plans to file plunder charges vs Villar

By Nikko Dizon

THE MILITANT GROUP SANLAKAS yesterday said it was considering filing plunder charges against Sen. Manuel Villar, his comadres Pete standard-bearer Bonifacio Ilagan and other officials of the alleged corrupt practices of his real-estate companies.

"If Villar thinks he can bully attorney Bonifacio Mendoza, well, he is fool wrong. We have something bigger for him," urged Giovanni, Sanlakas legal counsel and spokesperson, said yesterday at a press conference.

Giovanni also sent an accusal of Mendoza, who has a labor case against Villar, the companies and corporate officers with the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC).

In a complaint filed at the NLRC in Baguio last year, Mendoza decided the supposed irregularities committed by Villar's real estate firms in acquiring lands for property development.

Mendoza, 56, was a lawyer of Villar's extensive real estate acquisitions handling raw land issues, which he described as "sensitive."

"The married up a simple labor case and how he (Mendoza) appears to me as a very good resource person to gather facts sufficient to file a plunder case against Senator Villar," Giovanni said.

He said Sanlakas was in the process of unraveling the modus operandi of the Villar companies—"how (they) expanded, how (they) secured to get and corruption, or bribing other public officials in order to accommodate their cravin of land which were originally intended to serve agricultural workers."

Giovanni described the "modus operandi of land grabbing" supposedly by Villar's companies as "so serious that it should be a public case right now."

The plunder charge against Villar, which is a strong contender for the presidency, does not have to be filed before the election. Sanlakas because accused of politicking, Giovanni said.

"We can file it even if Manny Villar becomes President of the republic. We will hound him with impeachment complaints on the strength of the resolution of Atty. Nasty Mendoza," Giovanni said.

Giovanni described Mendoza as the "missing link" in the C-5 deal that had the Senate minority Villar for non-bail conduct.

Mendoza was part of the legal team that drafted the contracts for the swapping of property between Ayala Properties and Manila Development Corp. for the C-5 road extension project.

Noynoy warning: I'll void 'midnight' appointments, deals

From page A1

most all be subjected to the strictest scrutiny and misconduct-ridden retirement nominated."

Soldiers' lives are the price

Aquino lambasted the administration for failing to come up with a comprehensive national security program which failed to curb "endemic corruption" in the security services.

"Every peso stolen from the budget of our security organizations represents a drop of blood of our soldiers, airmen, sailors and police officers who risk their lives in the service of our nation," he said.

Aquino said procurement reforms that promote transparency must be fully implemented and include the participation of top-notch watchdogs. "Anyone caught profiting from procurement contracts will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Personal loyalties

Aquino accused the administration of undermining the defense establishment through the "midnight appointments" of favorites and through "politicization of the military."

"The most recent of these actions include midnight appointments in key leadership positions based on personal loyalties instead of merit," he said.

Other politically driven actions were the "coddling and arming" of warlords and private armies that have acted with impunity, as shown in the Maguindanao massacre, reversal of policies to weaken the military and police from partisan politics, and the "repeated abuse" of the Commander in Chief powers to promote a political agenda "in the guise of achieving reconciliation."

"It is unfortunate how the present administration has quickly forgotten that as a result of similar acts in the past, some of our sons and women in uniform have taken to the extreme and went to mutiny," Aquino said.

Why warlords are protected

He said the administration was pursuing warlords because they were political-election.

"It chose to coddle warlords willing to deliver continued votes come election time rather than secure them," he said.

Aquino cited the Maguindanao as a prime example of the Arroyo administration's failure to rein in warlords and resolve conflict in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

"The infamous Maguindanao massacre became the symbol of everything that has gone wrong in Maguindanao, ARMM and other conflict-ridden areas. While political warlords like the Ampatuans flex their kings, their own constituencies live in abject poverty and hopelessness," Aquino said.

Ominous sign

Aquino said the recent Department of Justice decision to release suspended ARMM governor Zaldy Ampatuan and Maguindanao Vice Gov. Ahmad Sakilan—both massacre suspects—bodied ill for the electorate in Maguindanao.

"Witnessed days from today, our people will go to thousands of precincts all over the archipelago to exercise their right to vote," Aquino said.

"The release of [the two Ampatuans] is not just a malicious dance—a few weeks before the elections. The manner of our fellow countrymen and sisters in Maguindanao, we can predict, will not be given freely and fairly," he added.

He said that from a broader perspective, the Maguindanao massacre and the Ampatuans "are the symptoms of a deeper systemic problem: The failure of the Arroyo administration to implement a comprehensive national security policy that focuses on the root causes of war and conflict."

"Unless we correct this problem immediately, the democratic way of life will never be secure in our country and prosperous will remain an elusive dream," Aquino said.

Under one flag

He said the national government, in partnership with international donor organizations, must assist the new ARMM government in building a capable bureaucracy with transparent procedures to speed up development projects.

Aquino vowed to make the peace process "transparent and participative" so that Filipinos would have a secure future "under one sovereign flag."

"With the consent of our people, I am confident that the next 44 years will be a watershed period in the history of our young nation that is at peace with itself and proudly marching toward an even brighter future," he said.

Why Chiz backing Jojo over Mar: 'Kulang sa kalyo,' he's spring chicken

From page A1

tch finally sa it might be a good thing if his running mate does not come from another rich family. And since Noynoy just recently lacks experience, his vice president should have a background to make up for that. I think they will complement each other," Tuesdaleon said.

He said he had nothing against Roxas, scion of one of the country's wealthiest families.

Escudero disappeared from the May election arena after he announced late last year he no longer was pursuing his presidential ambitions.

That was after he had a falling out with tycoon Enrique "Tanding" Cojuangco.

The scandalous then was that Cojuangco, head of the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) and reputed as a king-maker, wasn't going to finance Escudero's drive to the presidency that had a so-called "enjoy factor" of 9% billion.

Like Icarus

Escudero then said that he wasn't going to allow himself to be beholden to any political party and would assert a ground rival that would castrate him to Malacañang.

Escudero would enroll into happened and Escudero went into hibernation, reviled as a last-ers-day learn, the tragic Greek character who flew close to the sun on wings of wax and came crashing to earth a dead duck, sorry sir.

He had not been heard from since, until his commentaries from him that was helping Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, the Liberal Party presidential candidate, complained to media that it was having a hard time with them.

The team had reportedly handled Escudero's campaign last year. He was among the favorites to win the senatorial votes of presidential wannabes. He had run away to fight another day—in the 2010 elections, possibly against Roxas.

Roxas heads poll surveys in the vice presidential race.

Essence of RP democracy

Last year, Roxas entered stores to join Du May Dy-Liacco Bocobo race, but stepped aside for Aquino, who decided he wanted the presidency instead. Bocobo still after he saw the outpouring of grief upon the death of his mother, the former president Corazon Aquino.

Tuesdaleon said the TF ad, paid for by Roxas's friends, "should not be a cause for division or conflict within the LP."

He said he had also taped another TV ad for Aquino that will be aired this week.

"There is no Plan coming in our lives. This is the essence of democracy: that each and every voter is allowed to choose who he wants to vote for for a particular office," he said.

"I'm not saying that Senator Mike is the best presidential. I'm saying Senator Noynoy has been with the opposition longer, has done many things and is not just a talker. Also he had not backed away from a fight to reform the lives of others," Tuesdaleon said in Filipino.

"Sayang nga lang dahil sa kanya ang ad is against a republic persona, [I do not spend all my nights] hands just thinking about him," said Escudero.

"There is no need for us to talk. I am not mad at him. I have no issues against him. Just because I do not support his candidacy does not mean I am mad at him," Escudero said.

Not mad at Chiz

In an interview, Pimentel also dismissed suggestions that Escudero's endorsement of Noynoy is a ploy for something to do with 2010.

"I'm not thinking about that," Pimentel said. "What I'm focusing on right now is how to ensure that Senator Noynoy wins so that we would get the chance to have total change in our country."

Roxas said that Escudero had the right to endorse his choice of candidates. He also downplayed Escudero's alleged dig against him in Escudero's ad for Roxas as "just politics."

For united ticket

Sen. Francis Pangilinan, LP campaign manager, said:

"While we respect the decision of efforts to support a united ticket, we believe that for our nation to achieve real change we must have the strongest possible ticket between the president and vice president.

"A united ticket is essential for us to effectively lead the nation out of the mess it is in. This is best served by standing the synergy of both Noy and Mar in 2010."

With reports from Philip C. Tubeza and Gil C. Cabacungan

Jail warden sacked, or was he promoted?

From page A1

November 2009 massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao, to hold a joint conference in a high-risk prison on Tuesday appointed to have been kicked upstairs.

In an order dated yesterday, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno directed Senior Insp. Lloyd Lontoc to relinquish his duties as deputy warden of the Quezon City Jail Annex in Tanay City and carry out a chief of operations of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in the National Capital Region (BJMP-NCR) effective immediately.

Puno assigned Asst. Comm. Lorenzo Tayko to replace Lontoc as BJMP-NCR director, while Supt. Ferdinand Bentigan "Nepoy" Bagtas III.

The incident became controversial not only because it was held in a high-security prison but also because Arquiaran used it to extend his earlier declaration of support for Nacionalista Party (NP) presidential candidate Manuel Villar.

Puno also said Arquiaran's holding of a press conference was not irregular, and that such an activity was "allowed before, way back during the days of the PC-INP (Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police, the antecedent of today's police force)."

Sarmiento cited other instances when high-profile detainees like former ARMM Governor and rebellion suspect Nur Misuari, child rape convict Romeo Jalosjos and Pampanga mayor Rodolfo Pamintuan (convicted of the 1993 murder of American Leo Waldorf) were authorized to hold press conferences at a BJMP facility.

He reiterated that detainees and their lawyers are only needed to request media interviews or press conferences and the BJMP would make security arrangements.

Three years ago, the business was invited to a birthday lunch for Misuari at the Makati City Jail while awaiting the decision on his murder case. Sixteen were frisked and even. Gadly allowed to interview him with tape recorders and cameras.

Arquiaran's candidacy

Asked why the issue had become controversial, Barreiro said the question on who the prison chief was backing in the election shows everything one of hand.

"The Arquiarans] were really making to clarify some issues related to their case at the Department of Justice," Barreiro said. "But efforts to republican state ended it's bullet fit, he was asked who he was supporting, and the mess answered.

Barreiro said the BJMP had already planned security measures, including arrangements for possible interviews with the media, to be implemented in the jail, which they dubbed "Hotel Arquiaran."

He said that like other detainees, Arquiaran still had rights to self-expression.

Barreiro also cited necessity. But some said the media would still be allowed access to minutes.

"But the one to approve the request would be the interior secretary," he said.

'Hot one'

Sen. Edgardo Angara yesterday denied that he had invited embattled Arquiaran's press conference.

"Puno is completely relentless and baseless. I do not know anyone from the prison facility in Tanay. You can check my phone records. I have not made any calls nor written any letters to orchestrate the press conference for their benefactor," Angara said in a statement.

LP senatorial candidate Risa Hontiveros said on Wednesday that two lawyers identified with NP vice presidential candidate Loren Legarda had helped organize the press conference.

Hontiveros said one of the lawyers used to work for Angara and was now a member of Legarda's staff, and that the other was "recommended by Senator Angara to be a member of the Legal Defense team of Arquiaran IV."

She added: "We have received reports that operatives of the BJMP were responsible for the latest smear job against Sen. Noynoy Aquino. They merely the cross when subpoenaed him (Arquiaran) before the press conference."

Barring in all directions

But Angara dismissed the accusations and said it was unfortunate that the LP had "succumbed to bashing at any direction to cloud the issue of Arquiaran's endorsement."

"They said they have received reports that I was behind the press conference. I wish they examined its veracity first before flashing our with baseless accusations. As leaders of the country, we have a big role in nation building, especially in educating our fellow citizens of the national issues and our legislative agenda," he said, adding:

"And as such, we have to practice our credibility as a body. It's not good for the public to see their legislators feeding frenzies in conferences."

Angara also denied reports that his political party, Lakas-Kampi Kampi Kampi Kampi (Lakas-Kampi), was backing Villar.

"Even what they said about my support for Villar has no basis as stated on. My party, the LKK has expressed its support for Senator Legarda as its vice president. We do not back any presidential candidate up to now," he said.

Angara called on the candidates to stop the "campaign gimmickry."

"It is a disservice to our nation, and it denigrates our democracy. We must not resort to our an informed, educated vote, one that is based on platforms and not on who wants to be the least-rich," he said.

Damage control

Hontiveros had also said it was Arquiaran's legal counsel, Raphael Sarmiento, who arranged the press conference.

Harlan is a brother-in-law of NP spokesperson Gilbert Remulla, whose candidacy for the Senate has been endorsed by Arquiaran, she said.

"This is a classic attempt at damage control. It used to be false psychiatric evaluation reports; now it's a false endorsement. What will they think of next?" Hontiveros said. With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

DID YOU KNOW

THE FIRST ordination as priest by the first Quezon City Council on October 1938 denied the city title from Malolos. Children from five years old Manila, Mandaluyong, Quezon attended when Caloocan elected and University district.

Carl L. Bonifacio, Inquirer Research

CA ruling bars taipan's daughter from running

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE COURT OF APPEALS HAS BARRED A daughter of taipan Lucio Tan from running for Congress in the first district of Quezon City on the ground that she is not a registered voter.

In a ruling dated April 20, a special division of the appellate court's Eighth Division ordered the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to remove Vivienne Tan's name from the voters' list in Precinct 0053-A of Barangay Sto. Domingo, Quezon City.

Should the poll body comply with the court's order, this would bar Tan from running for public office because under the law, candidates should be registered voters.

"Tan's inclusion in the voter's list ... is invalid since she was not a Filipino citizen at the time of such registration and the law to vote that an individual must be a citizen of the Philippines for him to validly register as a voter," the appellate court said through Associate Justice Normandie Pizarro.

The court then upheld a ruling by Quezon City Metropolitan Trial Court Judge Augustus Diaz who said that Tan could not run for office due to questions about her citizenship.

According to the appellate court, the civil interdiction of an individual is the "first all-important factor" in determining whether or not the person may qualify as a voter.

Based on court records, the 42-year-old Tan became a naturalized American citizen on Jan. 19, 1995.

On Oct. 20 last year, she applied for registration as a voter by presenting a Filipino passport issued a month earlier. Her application was approved by Comelec on Nov. 16.

On Nov. 30, she took an oath of allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines, a day before she filed her certificate of candidacy.

On Dec. 1, she also filed a petition to reacquire her Filipino citizenship which the Bureau of Immigration approved that same day.

"Prior to Nov. 30, 2009 (when she took her oath of allegiance to the Philippines), Tan was a naturalized American citizen residing in the Philippines," the court said.

"Not being a Filipino citizen at the time of her application to be registered as a voter on Oct. 20, 2009, or at the time when her application was approved by the Comelec on Nov. 16, 2009, Tan's inclusion in the voter's list ... is therefore highly irregular and downright invalid," it added.

Tan had insisted that she already reacquired her dominion of citizenship in 1995 when she returned to the country permanently.

But the Court of Appeals said the defect in her voter's registration was not corrected by her subsequent reacquisition of Philippine citizenship.

"Interestingly, Philippine citizenship previously divested is not and must not be allowed to be cheaply reconvened," it said.

Reached for comment, Tan's lawyer maintained that her client is a Filipino and therefore could run for office.

"Her name appears in the list so and so overwhelming majority will vote for her," Tan's supporters said.

She claimed that the appellate court's decision was a reversible error because its findings were contrary to new laws on citizenship, adding that the ruling was not yet final.

Tan's other lawyer, Christian Robert Lim said: "It is clear that the Court of Appeals has disregarded clear provisions of the dual citizenship law," adding that they would bring the case even to the Supreme Court.

Tan is running against Rep. Nestor "Bingbong" Crisologo who filed the case against her at the trial court in Quezon City.

Lim, Manila officials face raps for burgers purchase

By Tina D. Santos

MANILA MAYOR ALFREDO LIM is facing yet another battle. His mess to count, after charges were filed against him in the Office of the Ombudsman in connection with the allegedly anomalous purchase of P200,000 worth of cheeseburgers.

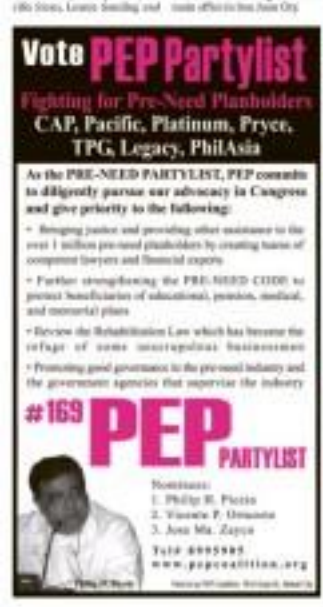
Lim was charged with violation of Republic Act 3019 (Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act) and 7160 (Local Government Code), malversation of public funds and falsification of documents by lawyer Reynaldo Reganting.

Other respondents were Secretary to the Mayor Katherine Espiritu, and city officials Jose Maria Ibon Mendoza, Christy Chan, Cecilio Sison, Lauren Sandig and Vicky Valmonte.

Reganting alleged that the respondents conspired in awarding catalog design and printing to the government where they validated receipts of Angel's Burger House where they bought 5,500 cheeseburgers.

He said the respondents made it appear that the burgers were intended for participants in a program of the Manila Women Friendly Keeping Across Town sponsored by the Manila Barangay Bureau, but the events never took place.

Rum, chair of the Bureau, however, denied the accusation, saying the program was held at the Rizal Football Stadium on August 2009 and was attended by 15,000 persons. He added that the cheeseburgers were ordered from the burger house's main office in San Juan City.



No choice but to freeze Makati bank account–BIR

By Aurora W. Domingo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue (BIR) is intent on freezing a bank account of the Makati city government.

The agency is trying to collect from the Makati-owned Land Bank that was accumulated to P1.2 billion. Based on its assessment, which the local government unit protested, the amount covered unpaid withholding tax on salaries, value-added tax (VAT) and withholding tax on VAT.

Earlier this month, the agency issued to the government-run Landbank of the Philippines a warrant of garnishment covering an account containing P1.147 billion belonging to City Hall.

Revenue Commissioner Joel L. Tan Torres said Landbank did not reject the request but only asked how to approach the issue, given the Supreme Court decisions on past cases. As soon as we make our clarification and present the necessary documents, Landbank will have no choice but to freeze the account," he said.

A letter from Landbank dated April 13 cited a circular and decision issued by the Supreme Court that said all money claims against the government must first be filed with the Commission on Audit, and that public funds can only be used for purposes for which these were appropriated.

But Tan Torres said the letter was accompanied by another that "just asks (the BIR) to explain and clarify some matters."

Landbank's concern was the warrant would run counter to the High Court decision because they didn't want to break any law, the BIR chief added. "They just want us to clarify some matters, like would the frozen account be used for the payment of Makati City's indebtedness to the BIR," he said.

Tan Torres added that the garnishment was meant to secure payment to raise City Hall would "not settle its obligation.

"Makati's fund in the account is not for payroll or operation purposes," he said. "Thus, garnishment would not disrupt the local government's operations."

Last week, the BIR planned to seize vehicles belonging to Makati as city officials' efforts to settling the unpaid taxes were "fast really moving forward," said Tan Torres.

The BIR earlier filed with the city's Register of Deeds a warrant of distraint and levy, meaning the BIR has a lien on the city's assets, a kind of security interest granted over an item of property to secure the payment of an obligation such as a debt.

Comelec, MMDA team clear Muntinlupa roads of poll bets' campaign posters

By Mike Montoy

A JOINT TEAM FROM THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) took down campaign materials posted in prohibited places in Muntinlupa City yesterday.

In a statement, Muntinlupa election officer Leander Ugalino said the cleaning operation was aimed at ridding the city of election materials displayed outside common poster areas designated by the Comelec such as electrical wires, trees or on private property.

He added that the team was only enforcing the rules set by the poll body on the placement of candidates' streamers and banners.

Yesterday's operations targeted Barangays Tunasan and Sucat where the team, assisted by local policemen, removed illegally placed campaign materials along roads.

Although some of the posters taken down belonged to Ism. Mayor Aldrin San Pedro, who is running for a second term, expressed support for the cleaning operation.

"Rules there enforcing the rules, the MMDA and Comelec are also supporting the drive to make our surroundings clean," he said in a statement.

CITATION FOR WOUNDED COP

Philippine National Police chief Jesus Verzosa pins the Medalya ng Sugatang Magiting (Wounded Personnel Medal) on PO1 Alvin Infante of the Special Action Force (SAF) who was wounded in Sunday's ambush connected to suspected communist rebels in Baras, Naval. Four SAF members were killed in the ambush while five others, including Infante, were wounded. AARON FAVILA

Transport group supports Mercado

By Mike Montoy

MEMBERS OF A TRANSPORT group have reportedly pledged their support for Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado's bid to become Makati's next mayor.

A statement from the Mercado camp said that the expression of support came from the Makati Jeepney Operators and Drivers' Association which also endorsed Mayor Jejomar Binay for his "unselfish and pro-poor implementation of the Land Transportation and Traffic Code."

"Mayor Binay installed in in 2008. The transport sector is suffering because of him," said Orlando Marquez, chair of the transport group. He was referring to a dispute two years ago in which Binay sought to shut down the proposals of drivers and operators organizing Sina based out to street terminals.

"Drivers practically can't take anything home to their families because of the high fines to reduce their incomes. This is a transition to the public," he said.

"We wish they would enforce the law equally—unlike now where they only select which provisions of the law they would implement," Marquez added.

He said they based on an informal survey they conducted, without "fill in" 90 percent of operators and drivers support Vice Mayor Mercado because he listens to Makati's poor."

Meanwhile, Binay has asked the Makati police chief, Senior Supt. Rodolfo Desiderio, to explain why armed groups allegedly hired by his son's rivals have been spotted in the city.

Binay's son, Councilor Jejomar Erwin "Junjun" Binay Jr., is running for mayor against Mercado, Erwin Gonzalez and former Sen. Agapito "Butz" Aquino.

"Step I know the names of your campaign against these persons who blatantly disregard the law," the mayor said in a letter to the police official.

Binay cited a string of what he said were election-related violent incidents, including the killing of his son's supporters.

METROBRIEFS

Rizal gov't desilts waterways

THE RIZAL provincial government has been conducting a cleanup of its canals and dams to ensure the smooth delivery of water to agricultural areas. Rizal provincial agriculturist Dr. Reynaldo Bonita said in an interview over the radio station "Radio" that the removal of sediments and sludge had blocked canals linked to the Magalang Communal Irrigation System and the reservoir dam in San Isidro, Rodriguez town. "Magalang's canals and dams have to be desilted in order to have an effective flow of water supply to the farmers," he told the radio guy. As of March, Bonita said the province has already suffered P5.21 million in agricultural losses.

Beverly T. Rafanelan

Two nabbed for stealing jewels

POLICEMEN have arrested and charged a housemaid and a goldsmith who allegedly took P12 million worth of jewelry from a woman. Manila Police District theft and robbery section head Chief Insp. Edgardo Carpio said that Bernadette Fredo, 31, and Daniel Obando, 52, both of Paco, Manila, were arrested based on the complaint of Ms. Rosario Mendoza. Carpio said that Mendoza had arrested Fredo of stealing her jewelry and valuables to Obando. Fredo was arrested first followed by the goldsmith who said that he had already melted down the jewelry. Fredo said she had sent the money she got from the goldsmith to her parents in Palawan. However, she said that the jewelry she stole was not worth millions of pesos.

Jeannette I. Andrade and Vince Evarts Fabian

Man stabbed dead by coworker

THE PROSECUTOR of a slaughterhouse was killed by his coworker before dawn yesterday in Bensalemo, Quezon City. The victim was identified as Joel Fuentebella, 28, a butcher working at a slaughterhouse in Barangay Hagdang-Bato. Reports reaching the Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said the victim was also in charge of distributing the pay of his coworkers. His alleged killer, Alberto Salas, was arrested and charged with murder before the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office with no bail recommended for his temporary liberty. Case investigator PO2 Erwin Fabon said the stabbing happened at around 2:30 a.m. yesterday in the slaughterhouse on Baco Street. Fuentebella was then talking to a fellow worker, Jay-R Placentia, when Salas, 58, confronted the victim over his unpaid salary for the day. The two started arguing during which the victim challenged Salas to a duel as their coworkers tried to pacify them. Irked, Salas left the scene but returned with a butcher's knife which he used to stab Fuentebella twice in the body. Police said the victim was rushed to East Avenue Medical Center where he later died. Responding barangay watchmen eventually arrested Salas and turned him over to the police.

Jun M. Zurbito and Bianca Dali, trainee

HEALTHY CAMPAIGN

Agapito "Butz" Aquino, mayoral candidate for Makati, and daughter Jamie lead a motorcade in the city's first and second districts to push his vision for a HEALTHY Makati. HEALTHY stands for Health Services, Education and Environment, Accountability, Livelihood, Transportation, Housing and Youth. ALEXANDER NEMENZO

After ash-fueled air crisis, recriminations fly

AMSTERDAM—AIRLINES TITED up hours topping $2 billion and struggled to get hundreds of thousands of travelers back home on Wednesday after a week of crippled air travel, as questions and recriminations erupted over Europe's chaotic response to the volcanic ash cloud.

Civil aviation authorities defended their decision to ground fleets and close the skies—and later to reopen them—against heated charges by airline chiefs that the decision was based on flawed data as unsubstantiated fears.

The evidence crisis sparked by a volcanic eruption in Iceland left millions in flight-free limbo, created debilitating losses for airlines and other industries and even threatened Europe's economic recovery. An aviation group called the financial fallout worse than the three-day worldwide shutdown after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

It was a lesson in mankind's dependency on air travel, the vulnerability of a vital industry, and the confusion that can ensue when each nation decides for itself how to handle a problem that crosses borders.

Nigel Gourlay, founder and chair Sir Richard Branson, the airline airline executives, was he cool to deal with the logistical and economic problems caused by the volcano's ash. He told BBC World News America that if governments can't deal with a similar situation in the future, they will likely deal with the problem differently.

"I think if they'd met places immediately to see whether the ash area actually was dangerous to fly through or to look for evidence where it wasn't very thick, I think that we would have been back flying a lot sooner," he said.

The air space over most of Europe opened on Wednesday after the vast, invisible ash-laden cloud dispersed to levels deemed safe. Restrictions remained over parts of Britain, Ireland, France and the Scandinavian countries.

Electronic boards in Europe's biggest cities—Paris' Charles de Gaulle and Germany's airport in Frankfurt—showed about 80 percent of flights on schedule as airlines began filling vacant seats with those who had been stranded for days. But with 132,000 flights scrapped worldwide over the last week, it could take days or weeks to get everyone home.

In Ireland, the volcano's fiery plume sent ash and smoke rise to 20 kilometers into the air like it did previously.

"There is much, much less ash production and the plume is drawing ash and smoke rise to 20 kilometers into the air like it did previously.

"There is much, much less ash production and the plume is

THE VOLCANO: southern Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull glacier which caused an aviation crisis continues to emit thick black smoke on April 21. AP

jafjallajokull remained active on Wednesday—the roving magma chamber the size of cars into the air, bubbling lava and producing tremors. But it was not

For president, one state visit becomes a 9-country tour

LONDON—WHEN PRESIDENT Tarja H. Ilves of Estonia arrived in Turkey last week, he had prepared for a state visit—one state visit. What he got, courtesy of an erupting volcano in Iceland, was more like a presidential road trip—nine countries in four days—evoking the sedate diplomacy of a bygone era.

Over 48 hrs Istanbul on Sunday. On Monday he was in Greece to dinner with President Boris Tadic of Serbia. In Poland, he stopped to lay a wreath on the tomb of President Lech Kaczynski. In between, he and the Estonian First Lady got their coffee and gas at roadside gas stations.

"I am not Odysseus returning to Penelope after 20 years; it has only been four days, so it is OK," said Ilves, speaking by cell phone as he approached Estonia just in time to host a dinner for visiting dignitaries.

Airports crumbled back to life across Europe on Wednesday. But after cobalt ash shut down air travel across the continent for a week, passengers still faced uncertain prospects for boarding flights. Unmoored thousands of others, having spent five hard or less journeys, were telling of epic adventures that involved, among many weary details, big out-of-pocket expenditures and a shortage of clean socks.

A manufacturing and sales team from 3M in Minneapolis-spilt on how to get home from a visit to England. "We are very Plan B right now," said Frank Klink, a laboratory manager for the company. "We were thinking Plan F or E might actually involve a ship."

The Four Couple of Estonia had a marvellous ride, albeit not a short one. Ilves and his 34-member delegation rented a bus to take them home from Turkey. But the security protocols in some countries meant he and his wife had to ride in a separate car much of the time. In each country he passed through he received the condition of the roads and of Internet access, and noted how many more markedly better than others. Ilves was two diplomats to name names.

In past the time, he read a book about European literary history, or a collection of essays by also carried written by the philosopher Isaiah Berlin. His wife, Evelin, read, too. At times when he had Internet access, he downloaded newspaper articles to read. He called his office a lot.

"It was all very civilized," Ilves noted. NYT

AN ELDERLY man walks past a restored statue of Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin outside a railway station in St. Petersburg. AP

Lenin fades as Russia marks leader's 140th birthday

By Marina Lapenkova

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN COMMUnists celebrated Lenin's 140th birthday on Thursday but the first Bolshevik leader is increasingly viewed as a dusty historical figure while his successors battle it out for control.

In 54 years' time "no one will remember Lenin except historians," 30 percent of Russians told the VTSIOM state polling agency in a survey published this week.

Lenin, the ideologue of the Bolshevik party as it took power in the 1917 October Revolution, is still a highly visible figure—communists called on an estimated 16,500 statues to pay tribute.

But almost two-thirds of those under 25 called themselves "indifferent" to Lenin in the VTSIOM poll.

Lenin, whose embalmed body still lies in the Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square, was glorified as a near-like figure until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

As part of indoctrination, nursery schoolchildren played stories portraits of the early bald young Lenin and learned poems about "Uncle Lenin." Later they were taught that the leader's discovered levels, studied at Moscow research institutes, showed clear signs of genius.

"It was 'preventive' then [studied Lenin off his pedestal," said political analyst Gleb Pavlovsky. "The new Russia did not want to trace its origin back to the 1917 revolution and wanted to forget Lenin."

The Communist Party and its liberal supporters were on Thursday hiding the birthday with rallies across the country but support for Lenin has dwindled in the past decade.

Over the last two decades, the number of Russians who spoke to the Lenin era "the most important world figure" has fallen almost by half, from 72 to 34 percent, according to the Levada independent polling center.

In a playful attack, a Lenin statue in the center of St. Petersburg had a hole blown through its nose on April Fools' Day in 2009. The culprits were never found although the statue has been restored.

Meanwhile Stalin is experiencing a post-Soviet wave of approval. Over the same period, the number of Russians who judge Stalin's role would most important figure has tripled from 12 to 36 percent.

A survey carried out in December by the VTSIOM state polling agency found that 47 percent of Russians had "positive" feelings towards Stalin.

And Stalin still stirs passions across the generations.

A commemorial plan by the Moscow city government to portray Stalin in posters for Victory Day on May 9 prompted both war veterans and opponents of the dictator to send open letters of protest to newspapers this week.

Stalin, who ruled the Soviet Union from Lenin's death in 1924 until his own death in 1953, "established the structure of the Soviet empire and achieved Russian more than Lenin," said Leonid Gozman, researcher Denis Volkov.

Stalin "is perceived as the strongest leader and the author of the Soviet victory over the Nazis in World War II, which for Russians is by far the most important event of the last century," Volkov said.

Activist Valery Khomyakov of the Council on National Strategy argued that such a "distinction between the two tyrants is unethical," however.

"Lenin was the author of the Red Terror, who unleashed crimes against our and laid the foundations for Stalin's crimes," he said. AP

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Belgium, France set to ban wearing of full Islamic veil

MUSLIM women wearing various types of Islamic veils: a burqa (top left), a khadur (top right), a niqab (bottom right) and a hijab.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (AFP) — Belgium's parliament on Thursday voted to ban a ban on wearing the Muslim burqa in public, the first such clampdown in Europe, just a day after the French government promised a similar law.

But a political crisis threatening the Belgian government and elections from France's constitutional watchdog mean the controversial measures might not make it into law.

Belgium's parliament rose to vote on the law after its home affairs committee unanimously backed a nationwide ban on clothes or veils that do not allow the wearer to be fully identified, including the full-face niqab and burqa.

Only both the governing parties and the opposition supporting the measure. The ban's sponsors expected to approve the draft law.

It would allow fines of 15-25 euros ($20-$34) and/or a jail sentence of up to seven days, but anyone ignoring it orders their local police permission to wear such garments.

But a party is threatening to pull out of the ruling coalition unless talks between the French and Dutch-language communities on power-sharing are tackled in 24 hours.

And that means that the day's proceedings in parliament could yet be disrupted.

The French government said on Wednesday it would ban Muslim women from wearing a full-face veil in public despite a warning from experts that such a ban could be unconstitutional.

The spokesperson for President Nicolas Sarkozy's government said a bill would be presented to ministers in May and would seek to ban the niqab and the burqa from streets, shops and markets, not just from public buildings.

Most Muslim women in France's immigrant communities and around the world, do not wear a full veil, but the niqab, which covers the face apart from the eyes, is widely worn in the Arabian peninsula and in the Gulf states.

The burqa, a shapeless full-body cloak that covers the face with a fabric grille, is worn in some parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"We're legislating for the Taliban," government spokesperson Luc Chatel told reporters after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Sarkozy.

"Wearing a full veil is a sign of a community closing in on itself and of a rejection of our values," he added.

Last month however, the State Council—France's top administrative authority—warned Sarkozy against a full burqa ban.

It argued in a report that such a ban would run counter to the principle of freedom to wear clothes of one's choice or meetings with officials.

In France, as in Belgium, fines or jail sentences of up to seven days, and/or courses in citizenship, could be imposed on those who refuse to remove the veil.

The government's proposal has already sparked fierce debate in France, with critics saying it would stigmatise Muslims and violate basic freedoms.

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"This is a law that is a reaction to a problem," said Judith Sunderland, senior Western Europe researcher at Human Rights Watch.

"They violate the rights of those who choose to wear the veil and do nothing to help those who are compelled to do so." "Bans were an evidence that wearing the full veil in public (has) raised public safety, public order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, she added.

"At a time when Muslims in Europe feel more vulnerable than ever, the last thing needed is a ban like this. Existing press Muslim women like criminals won't help integrate them," Sunderland added. AFP

Mexico's top clergyman hit again by priest abuse lawsuit

MEXICO CITY—MEXICO'S TOP CLERGYMAN is accused in a new lawsuit of ignoring two decades of sexual abuse by a Roman Catholic priest and conspiring to shuttle him between the United States and Mexico to avoid arrest.

The case, filed on Tuesday in a California court, is being brought by an anonymous man who says he was raped in 1997 when he was 12 years old in Mexico by a priest accused of numerous abuse charges in both countries.

In the latest case against the Catholic Church over alleged molestation of children, the lawsuit claims Cardinal Norberto Rivera knew about the priest's history of abuse and protected him from prosecution, allowing him to continue as a practicing priest until he was defrocked last year.

The priest, Nicolas Aguilar Rivera, was first accused of molestating boys in 1987 when the cardinal was a high-level bishop. Aguilar Rivera was beaten up in a small town in Mexico by parishioners who accused him of sleeping with boys in his charitable, the lawsuit says.

Cardinal Rivera, who is not related to Rivera the priest, had him transferred to a church in Los Angeles where he was accused of abusing two dozen boys over nine months, said the defendant's lawyer, Attorney Del Mazo.

Reuters

Pope: Church 'acting' vs pedophile priests

VATICAN CITY—BENEDICT XVI on Wednesday said the Roman Catholic Church was taking action against the scourge of pedophile priests in the most candid remarks to an European audience United States.

Recalling his meeting on Sunday with victims of predatory priests in Malta, the Pope said: "I shared their suffering and, with emotion, I prayed with them, assuring them that the Church was acting" to address the crisis.

A virtual group in the United States received the remarks saying: "When the Pope promises action, what he means are 'paper words.' He's making verbal promises, and will not make concrete promises, nor does of which will ever reach impact," Brenda Blaine, president of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), said in a statement.

Dozing has lightening cuts to Malta, the Pope pressed with the victims "and assured them that the Church is doing, and will continue to do, all in its power to investigate allegations (and) to bring to justice those responsible for abuse," a Vatican statement said on Sunday.

Benedict promised the victims "effective measures designed to safeguard young people in the future", it added.

The Pope addressed a pastoral letter to Irish Catholics last month expressing "shame and remorse" for the sexual abuse of children by priests and ordained bishops and for their "serious mistakes" in responding to allegations.

He also announced "apostolic visitations" including a mission to Irish dioceses affected by sex scandals that would include a review of their conduct.

On April 12, the Vatican published on its website the procedure for bishops to follow over allegations of child molestation by priests, saying that guilty clerics should be reported to the police.

Blaine told AFP: "He wants the Vatican to take concrete action to really protect children, like firing corrupt bishops and establishing a website with a database of the names of those who have molested children." She added: "We want the Church also to support reforms of secular laws that should penalize" in particular statutes of limitations which allow persons pedophile priests from being brought to justice.

Speaking at his weekly general audience, the Pope said he told the Maltese victims in the world moving "not to be afraid of life's storms or even ship wrecks, because the love of God is greater than storms or ship wrecks." The remark was an allusion to the ship wreck of the Apostle Paul on Malta 1,950 years ago, an anniversary that the Pope marked with his visit.

Brendan, who met with victims of priestly abuse in Australia and the United States in 2008, has come under increasing pressure over allegations that the Vatican hierarchy, himself included, helped protect predator priests. AFP

CANNES LIONS 2010 CYBER AND DESIGN JURIES ANNOUNCED

CANNES LIONS 57TH INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING FESTIVAL 20-26 JUNE 2010

The organizers of the 57th International Advertising Festival are pleased to announce the members of the final two Cannes Lions juries to be revealed, Cyber and Design.

Terry Savage, Festival Chairman, said, "In 2010 we welcome two juries who will be instrumental in showcasing the best work in two disciplines that influence our lives on an hourly basis. They are some of the best people working in the industry which is lifting her two such important categories as Design and Cyber."

CYBER LIONS JURY

USA, Jeff Benjamin
Group Partner & Magazine - Jury President

Argentina, Marian Ish, DDB Argentina
Australia, Damian Payne, Clemenger BBDO Melbourne
Austria, Herbert Pribitzer, author
Belgium, Stijn Sellebaijt, Boondoggle
Brazil, Jean Boechat, DM9 Brasil
Canada, Dawna Henderson, Henderson Bas
China, Bo Hong, Sina Technologies
Denmark, Rasmus Fonnesbæk, Lab Copenhagen
France, Philippe Skonieczny, Stéphanefilms
Germany, Elke Hildebrandt, Neue Digitale / Razorfish
India, Prasanna Kulkarni, Ogilvy one Worldwide India
Japan, Yuki Kishi, Dentsu
Korea, Jeung Hack Lee, Cheil Worldwide
New Zealand, Lachlan McPherson, Publicis Mojo New Zealand
Norway, Markus Lind, Kid
France, Nabil Saadi, Change Connections
Singapore, David Brown, SM Asia Pacific
Spain, Iñaki Ibarrola Velasco, Publicis Modem
Sweden, Martin Lundgren, Readers Hotel
The Netherlands, Digger Dohen, Dotfiles
UK, Matt Powell, Profero
UK, Edward Robinson, The Viral Factory
USA, Pete Hawthaven, Tribal DDB
USA, Drew Gardner, R/GA

DESIGN LIONS JURY

USA, Stefi Geraniotis, Lilla Partners - Jury President

Brazil, Alexia Maquere, CC Design
Canada, Lucie Gagnon, Pixelfile
France, Gilles Belkha, Belkha
Germany, Joachim Nowak, BPS worldwide
India, Peter Handy, Pure Leo
Italy, Bruno Bozzetto
Japan, Katsuhiko Suzuki, Hakuhodo
Malaysia, Mun Tuck Hee, BBDO Proximity Malaysia
Portugal, Eugenio Clavaz, Ever BBDO
Russia, Alexey Kalayev, Client (RPF Brand&Identity)
Singapore, Wai Poh, Beyond
South Africa, Bernie Venn, Kit & Caboodle
Sweden, Björn Kjellberg, Stockholm Design Lab
UK, Glenn Tolland, The Brand Union
USA, Noreen Morioka, Interabang

Judging will take place in Cannes during the Festival week. The winners of the Cyber and Design categories being will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 23 June 2010.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer is the country's official representative at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival. For more information, you may contact our Corporate Affairs office at (63-2) 896-6000 local 2200. To submit entries or register as delegates, log in to www.canneslions.com.

INQUIRER Official Festival Representative

INQUIRER mobile news

INQUIRER BREAKING NEWS: No reports of damage from quake in Luzon. Phivolcs: intensity 5 in Looc, Mindoro Occ; 4, QC, Mandaluyong, Makati; 3, Rosario, Cavite, Clark in Pampanga, Bagac, Bataan and Canlubang, Laguna; 2, Calamba, Laguna.

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The WORLD

Editor Lamberto R. Glocoo

Anger rises against Red Shirt protests

BANGKOK—ANGER AMONG BANGKOK RESIDENTS mounted on Thursday against antigovernment protesters who have entrenched themselves in the capital's commercial district, causing the closure of hotels and offices and disrupting incomes.

A loose coalition opposed to the so-called Red Shirts, who are demanding that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva dissolve parliament and call new elections immediately, planned a mass rally on Friday, further igniting the city into hostile camps.

They were also preparing further confrontations with the protesters across an intersection access to the "no-go zones" where angry residents and Red Shirts and shouted "Give back our city" and "SOBOlize, get out."

The anti-Red Shirt group includes office employees, middle-class families, academics, some low-wage workers and members of the Yellow Shirts, a group that supports the current government and who themselves rampaged through Bangkok and seized the city's airports two years ago.

On Thursday several hundred protesters rallied in front of the regional headquarters of the United Nations, submitting a request for international peacekeepers to monitor the situation in Thailand. Despite government warnings that the demonstrators would no longer be able to stage marches outside their enclave, authorities did nothing to stop the peaceful rally.

In one effort to avert further violence, a letter was received on Thursday by the office of King Bhumibol Adulyadej from the head of a pro-Red Shirt political party asking for an audience with a monarch who in the past has stepped in to end violent political crises, the newspaper Bhimdhoo reported.

The ailing, 82-year-old king has been hospitalized since Sept. 19 and has made no comments on the current turmoil. In 1992, the greatly revered king ended a bloody confrontation between the military and pro-democracy protesters by calling in leaders of the opposing sides and instructing them, on nationwide television, to cease hostilities.

Now, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, a former prime minister who now heads the pro-Red Shirt Phuea Thai Party, is seeking a similar intervention by the king.

Thailand's tense political crisis also spread from Bangkok to the northeast late Wednesday as antigovernment demonstrators blocked a train carrying military vehicles that they claimed would be used to suppress fellow protesters in the capital.

A failed April 10 attempt by security forces in Bangkok to flush protesters from their five encampments erupted into the worst political violence Thailand has seen in 18 years, with 25 people dead and more than 800 wounded.

The protesters consist mainly of poor rural supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and pro-democracy activists who opposed the military coup that ousted him in 2006 after months of demonstrations by the Yellow Shirts.

The Red Shirts believe Abhisit's government is illegitimate because it came to power under military pressure through a parliamentary vote after disputed court rulings ousted two elected pro-Thaksin governments.

Speculation is rife the government is set to forcibly remove the Red Shirts from the blocks of central Bangkok they've occupied for weeks. Soldiers in full combat gear have been stationed in the business district's main streets to block the protesters from entering it.

Early Thursday, bulldozers were seen flying high above the protest site, but their purpose was not clear. Protesters shot fireworks at them.

Adding to the tension, several hundred pro-government protesters gathered late Wednesday across **from the Red Shirts, shouting, jeering** and throwing rocks and bottles at them.

They squared off just meters apart from their rivals as security forces watched. AP

ANTIGOVERNMENT demonstrators put up makeshift barricades on April 21 in Bangkok.

Japan shaken by a reality: Many of its people are poor

MUMORI, JAPAN—SATOMI SATO, a 51-year-old mother, knew she had it tough raising a teenage daughter on the less than ¥17,000 a year she earned from two jobs. Still, she was surprised last autumn when the government announced for the first time an official poverty line—and she was below it.

"I don't want to say the word 'poverty' but I'm definitely poor," said Sato, who works mornings making bento lunches and afternoons delivering newspapers. "Poverty is still a very unfamiliar word in Japan."

After years of economic stagnation and widening income disparities, this once proudly egalitarian nation is belatedly waking up to the fact that it has a large and growing number of poor people. The Labor Ministry's disclosure in October that almost one in six Japanese, or 20 million people, lived in poverty in 2007 caused a national uproar and ignited a debate over possible remedies that has raged ever since.

Many Japanese, who cling to the popular myth that their nation is uniformly middle class, were further shocked to see that Japan's poverty rate, at 15.7 percent, was close to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's figure of 17.1 percent in the United States, whose glaring social inequalities have long been viewed with scorn and pity here.

But perhaps just as surprising was the government's admission that it had been keeping poverty statistics secretly since 1998 while denying there was a problem, despite occasional anecdotal evidence to the contrary. That ended when a left-leaning government led by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama replaced the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party last summer with a pledge to force Japan's bureaucracy to serve the common good more openly, particularly about social problems, government officials and poverty experts said.

"The government knew about the poverty problem, but was hiding it," said Makoto Yuasa, head of the nonprofit Antipoverty Network. "It was afraid to face reality."

Following an internationally recognized formula, the ministry set the poverty line at about ¥122,000 a year for a family of four, half of Japan's median household income. Researchers estimate that Japan's poverty rate has doubled since the nation's real estate and stock markets collapsed in the early 1990s, ushering in two decades of income stagnation and even declines. AFP

Seoul believes Pyongyang torpedoed its Navy warship

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREA'S MILITARY BELIEVES that a North Korean submarine launched a torpedo attack to sink a South Korean warship last month near their disputed sea border, the Yonhap news agency said on Thursday.

The assessment was reported to the office of President Lee Myung-bak and the defense ministry immediately after the ship sank last month, an unnamed senior military source told Yonhap.

"It's our military intelligence's assessment that North Korean submarines attacked the ship with a heavy torpedo," the source said, adding that the subs were armed with torpedoes with 200-kilogram warheads.

Since February last year, North Korea has strengthened training that showed the possibility of it launching a guerrilla-warfare-style provocation, rather than a skirmish."

The South's military intelligence command had also alerted the Navy ahead of the March 26 sinking of the Cheonan that North Korea was preparing an attack, Yonhap said.

Email has so far estimated from directly recording Pyongyang and said only that an "external explosion" was the most likely cause of the disaster which cost the lives of 46 sailors.

Pyongyang has denied it was responsible.

South Korean Defense Minister Kim Tae-Young has already raised the possibility that a cache of torpedo duty have sunk the ship, following deadly naval clashes in 1999 and 2002 and a November firefight. AFP

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BDO

2010/G-Tour

Last April 5, Globe Business hosted the G-Tour 2010 at The Orchard Golf and Country Club in Dasmariñas, Cavite. The tournament brought together Globe Business executives and their enterprise clients for a day of sport, spirited diversion and friendly competition.

Already on its ninth year, the G-Tour is considered one of the most awaited golf events in the business community. Welcoming everyone to the tournament was Globe President and CEO, Mr. Ernest Cu. During his opening remarks, Mr. Cu expressed his appreciation for the friendship and partnership that the participants have maintained with Globe over the years.

The tournament teed off at 8:30 am in Orchard's Player Course. Golf enthusiasts from various industries such as manufacturing, financial services, IT, retail, pharmaceutical and O&G showcased their best drives, pitches and putts under a modified version of the 1-2-3 Best Ball format. Under this system the highest score among the four players counted as the team score for the first hole, the two middle scores were used for the second hole, while the three highest scores were counted for the third hole. The cycle then repeats for the rest of the holes.

In the end, Jimmy Camacho of Menarco, Renato Ermita of AGC-Flat Glass, Ariel Garrabbo of Wincor Nixdorf and Ric Padino of Bayer Philippines bested 129 golfers and were named tournament champions. As winners, they each received trophies and gift certificates.

Adding more excitement to G-Tour 2010, fantastic prizes were raffled off to lucky participants. Among the major prizes were high-end mobile phones, PING G10 Iron Sets, PING Customized Iron Sets and a brand new Club Car golf cart.

From Shell Shared Services Asia BV, Mr. Noel Parano has been attending the golf tournament for the last five years. When asked about his insights on this year's event, he said, "This tournament is especially exciting because of the new game format. It was all about team effort this time around. Also, the format was a great way of keeping all the players involved in the fate of their teams."

Globe Business Head, Mr. Gil Genio, also expressed his gratitude to the golfers for making the tournament a huge success. "The G-Tour epitomizes how much we love being in the company of our customers," said Mr. Genio. "We want to share great experiences with our clients, not only in the way we service their businesses but during events like this as well."

Mr. Jesus Romero, Enterprise Segments Head, likewise conveyed his appreciation to all who contributed to the well-attended event. "We look forward to another successful G-Tour with more friends, partners and participants to make the tournament even more exciting in 2011," said Mr. Romero.

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Globe Business

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SPORTS

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Magic seize 2-0 lead; Spurs equalize series /A34

BANGER Benilde sets up San Sebastian teammate Suzanne Roces (left) for an attack off FEU's Mechi Dulalia and Vira Pagdanganan.

Lady Stags oust FEU

St. Benilde hangs on with solid win over USJ-R

By Cedelf P. Tupaz

SAN SEBASTIAN TURNED ITS DUEL WITH Far Eastern University into a virtual mockout, coming away with a resounding 25-9, 25-15, 25-6 win yesterday in the Shakey's V-League Season 7 First Conference at the MOM Flying V Arena in San Juan.

The Lady Stags posted their third straight victory in under an hour as they warmed up for their barely-awaited clash with defending champ University of Santo Tomas on Sunday.

Another squad fighting for survival, St. Benilde, moved off elimination by rolling back University of San Jose-Recoletos, 26-24, 25-16, 25-15, in the first game.

The win assured St. Benilde of at least a playoff for the last quarterfinal berth in Group B.

The Lady Tamaraws wound up with a 0-4 record, their campaign thwarted by injuries to key players.

"We have a combination of everything for us," said FEU coach Ed Antonio. "Our players are injured. We don't have the game players we wanted. We have been unlucky. Look at what happened to Vira in our last game."

Cherry Hiwa, the reigning UAAP Most Valuable Player, saw limited action after spraining her ankle while warming up in their previous game. Sisters Michelle and Mayette Cantkiwa, the guest players FEU wanted, were not allowed to play by the Philippine Army.

FEU's loss gave the nod to the entry of University of St. La Salle-Bacolod and Cebu's Southwestern University in the quarterfinals of the tournament hosted by Mighty Bond, Accel, Milana and FLDT MyOil.

St. Benilde wrapped up its elimination-round campaign with a 1-4 record.

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First look: Ateneo-La Salle FilOil duel tomorrow

By Cedrill P. Tapus

ATENEO AND LA SALLE TEST EACH other's strength for the first time this year when they collide tomorrow in the FILOIL Flying V Tuesday Slam Fest Pre-Season Invitational Cup.

The Blue Eagles will clash three consecutive winning streak at 4 p.m. against the Archers at the FILOIL Flying V Arena in San Juan.

Both squads will parade retooled rosters following the departure of players who keyed their campaigns for past five years.

A day before the highly anticipated showdown between the Red Cheer Dancers, University of the Philippines rookie hosts its bask counterpart Ateneo Blue Eagles-Quezon City College.

Sometime at 4 p.m. today with the Fighting Maroons gunning for their second win in three games.

Clashing in the first game at 2 p.m. are Arellano and Letran. The Chiefs are hoping to bounce back from their narrow loss to Adamson Tuesday against the well-rested Knights at 2 p.m.

La Salle 4

Behding a rookie-laden roster in the tournament with only Joshua Webb, Ferdinand, Mont Villamor-ca and Simon Atkins among the holdovers from the past two seasons.

But the coach of the team that beat La Salle, Aboy Castro of University of the Philippines, expects the Archers to get tougher as the tournament progresses.

"They're a tough team to beat," said Castro, whose Maroons scored a 68-61 victory over the Archers last Wednesday.

"They have Mac-Mac rookies which may team would love to have. They will get better down the road. There are going to be growing pains but you just have to go through it."

The Archers' young rookie-cast include Luigi dela Paz, Philip Paredes, Jordan Tampus, Alex Elorde, Ahmed Vicerra and Martin Reyes.

Ateneo retains a front with rookie center Jason Ericsto showing a lot of promise in the first two games.

The 6-foot-9 Ericsto led the five players with double-seconds producing that lifted the Eagles to a 78-77 squeaker over the Arellano Chiefs last Wednesday.

Veterans Nic Salomon, Kiefer Mendoza, Rich Long, Marco Aurelio and Nico Jofre have provided stability for the Eagles who lost big men Rabeh Al-Hussaini, Hasan Baqui and point guard Ad Perez to graduation.

ASIAN CHESS TILT

So clobbers UAE foe, ties for lead

14-year-old Wesley So has won opening experience.

By Ray Lustica

SUBIC—FILIPINO GRANDMASTER WESLEY SO is reaping the dividends of an expanded opening repertoire.

Edged out for the Grandchild for the first time in tournament play, So trounced GM Saleh Salem of the United Arab Emirates yesterday to share top spot in the 9th Asian Individual Chess Championship at the Subic Exhibition and Convention Center here.

The 16-year-old So, ranked fourth with an Elo rating of 2692, posted his second straight victory to boost his bid for the winner's purse of $6,000 (about P287,000) and one of the 2011 World Cup slots at stake in the tournament proper.

Tied with So at yesterday was Indonesian GM Susanto Megaranto, veteran over Filipino Feb Mones Roach Jr.-Iquiza, who came into the game inspired by an upset victory over Vietnamese GM Bui Vinh in the opening round.

"I chose the Grunfeld because it's more tactical and complicated," said So, who spent one month studying new openings for this tournament where he missed the magic 2500 the last two editions.

Playing with black, So gave up a rook, knight and bishop in exchange for Salem's queen to gain momentum and force Salem to surrender after 27 moves.

It was So's second straight win over losers since the 2008 Dubai Open. He beat Vietnamese IM Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son in the last round.

Filipino GM Rogelio "Joey" Antonio split the point with Chinese International Master Gao Hui after 26 moves of a Caro Kann and was in a big group with 5.5 points.

Seed-wise, sixth placer and top Filipino qualifier in last year's World Open Cup, crowned Chinese GM Ruan Tang of China Wednesday.

Also with 5.5 points were Filipino elims-finalists, who toppled IM Kiel Rodemore of Guadeloupe, and IM Deveraj M. Bindu of India, who stunned top-seed GM Li Chang Lian.

Lou Yiping of China downed 30th seed GM Pentala Harikrishna of India, Le Shanqi-ki tipped Chinese compatriot GM Yang Wen and WIM Reen Pushpita of India over Jan Emmanuel Rosen-ndow of Uzbekistan.

Seeded tenth standard Jun Emmanuel Garcia held Asia's first GM Eugene Torre to a draw and to did Joey Rubio against GM John Paul Gomez.

All four female local bets—WIM Bernadette Galinato, Catherine Perena-no, Mary Sabador and Abegail Antale dropped their opening round matches in the women's division.

Darwin Layla, who whipped Mongolian FM Nyambayl Bayarga in the opener, agreed to a truce with Mongolian GM Enebarger Shaarabor.

The nine-round event offers a total purse of P600,000, including $15,000 for the women's competition.

D. Monte bet forges ahead with solid 66

CLYDE MONDILLA FIRED EIGHT BIRDIES en route to a six-under par 66 and a six-shot lead in boys' Class A as powerhouse Team Dumaguete made the Wander Boys their Big City rivals Wednesday in the third round of the Junior Pirates' golf championship tournament of the PCTE Angeli Formaran Circuit.

Mondilla, a scholar of the Living My Dreams Foundation from Del Monte, had aimed of 33-30 on the blonde Southwoods Legends course to shooting the best round of the event so far.

With his 54-hole total of 212, Mondilla pulled away from the field led by Wander's Jhon-Jhon Ilagan (76-221). Go Sandhar secured spot in third (75-226) over Anders Salchaw (81-226).

Cebu's Brian Gabaza matched par 72 for 223 and a nine-shot lead in girls' Class A. Mary Monaster and Andie Unson were tied for second at 237 after 173 and 74, respectively.

Sherwin Gamosmos all but clinched the girls' Class B plum with a hefty 22-stroke lead while Migay Ma. Regine Sarigumba, Jeanette Da Ryan Monaster and Mia Legaspi also built considerable leads in their respective divisions.

The tournament will salute the members of the Philippine delegation to the Asian World this coming July in San Diego, California.

Bonnella Uy was poised to end Wednesday's parade unbeaten run. She bested other five-peeled Cebuanos scores with a 75-230.

She led 69 Hunters by 11 in boys' Class B. Ilaragan was up by 10 over Gabby Mandoc in boys' Class C and Ryan Monaster was ordered by 11 over Jett Balajija in boys' Class D. Ilagan led shiny Jaredo by 12 in girls' Class C.

At the Riviera executive course, Josh Jaug and Karl Gaspar were tied for the top spot at 189 in boys' Class E while Jed Dj Aaron Tagaytay and Brendor Oliveros-Bac and her brother Miguel took commanding leads in the other divisions.

Jaug scored a 39 to catch up with Gaspar (80-4) 189.

TOADMAN

Smart Gilas RP five may go all-Pinoy

By Jane Meneses

THOUGH PROSPECTS ARE BRIGHT THAT Smart Gilas will still be able to have a unbeaten third consecutive run, coach Rodo Tan-eman says he is ready to gamble with an all-Filipino cadre head for the Asian Games.

Tan-eman is already bracing for the possibility of going all-Filipino in the Pilot Asia Championship Cup in Doha, Qatar, next month's and vows to the Asiad in Guangzhou, China, in Novem-ber after three failed attempts to recruit a naturalized for suited-blooded.

"If we don't find one, we'll play all-Filipino crew in the Asian Games," said the Smart Gilas mentor, who led four to the 2005 Fiba Asia Championship and a bronze crew to the 2008 Beijing Olympics without naturalized players.

Smart Gilas manager Frankie Lim said that several naturalization prospects of the SBP five have either hooked up with a fun-sports billclub or jumped to the NBA.

If Smart Gilas fails to get an American import before the Asiad on Nov. 12 to 25, Tan-eman plans to use Serbian Milos Vujanic, 6-5-born 10 inside operator, to try out for the PBA team, Markovic, 25, currently plays in Greece, Poland and Qatar.

"We showed in Incheon that we can play without our import," said Tan-eman, who missed Smart Gilas to third place against foreign-clubs with at least three imports in the Doha International tournament won by host-land Aspetar.

Cyclists need foreign exposure, says Lina

FORMER CYCLING diehard Representative Bert Lina evidently shed the need to give big Filipino cyclists more foreign exposure in order to take their competitive level.

"We need to do that because we want our cyclists to know how to be fast," said Lina, who helped crowd the record-meeting meeting long through his Bukidnon House.

Lina is also one of the chief proponents of the La Tour de Filipinas, which opened doors to foreign cyclists to get their skills against the Philippines' best.

Bradley Inc. pedaler Jan Paul Morales topped the four-stage race that ended in Subic last Tuesday with Filipino Eusebio Lloyd Reynante and Baler Reuben pinching second and third, respectively.

Lina who has established an empire in the cargo forwarding and logistics business, could field sports is a significant aspect of nation building.

"When you're physically fit, you can do almost anything," said Lina. "Here can you direct your business or whatever you do when you doing if your body is weak?"

LINA: Healthy people

Lina also stressed the importance of sustainable grassroots sports programs to enhance the country's chances in international competitions.

"A healthy citizenry is capable of winning this nation to progress," said Lina.

"But it must start in the grassroots. Hindi all sitio and municipalities must respond or increase the number of their playgrounds, so that the youth can engage in sports."

Lina is also into basketball through his 02 Express in the Philippine Basketball Association.

Rallies by jumpshots

Meanwhile Basketball Association (MBA) and the Laguna Lakers team, which also represented the Philippines in several Asian tournaments such as the Asian Basketball Confederation in 1999 and the Asean Cup in 2000 and 2002, among others.

Lina also hosts the Alberto E. Lina Golf Cup, now on its 20th staging. He is coming off his child custody battle in case in the Hacienda Quezon Palm Garden Golf and Residential Estates, in Quezon City last month.

Cedrill P. Tapus

Should the lion roar or purr?

ONE GAME AT A TIME

Sir Sacramento

THE LOS ANGELES LAKERS HAVE JUMPED to a 2-0 lead against the Oklahoma City Thunder in the first round of the playoffs but they are already speculating on how the intimidating champions will fare after this experience with.

The Thunder are a decent team but pale in comparison to Lakers' talent and playoff experience. They had a chance to win Game 2 but took their pressured shots in the end-game that had their hopes of dropping in.

As reported, it's been Kobe Bryant leading the charge with 22 points in Game 1 and 29 in the second encounter. His 9-of-10 free throw tally helpful to the production and rebounding of the Lakers' frontline.

The Lakers' second-tower Pau Gasol and Andrew Bynum have been picking up the misses on both boards while providing hustle to supporting inside.

Gasol, the former San Antonio, has lead/bagged scoring games with 19 points and 17 boards in Game 1 and 23 points and 12 rebounds in Game 2. Bynum, the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar pupil, is running his presence felt with contributions like his 12 points and 13 rebounds in Game 2.

The presence of their reliable frontline is allowing Bryant to pread the floor and do what he does best—go for the finish. Bryant since could in the meantime number of shots he takes like his 12-for-24 clip in Game 2 that produced 29 points.

This was the case of the spirited discussion of inside the NBA, a TNT network roundup of NBA action. It's one of the liveliest hoop shows on the tube with the insights and banter of host Ernie Johnson and NBA veterans Charles Barkley and Kenny Smith keeping fans glued for half an hour.

Johnson started by quoting Phil Jackson's concern that his Lakers' star has to take better shots and share the leather more with his teammates. Barkley agreed with Jackson while Smith felt that you couldn't just make your team lose a calculated comeback for the playoffs.

There are two points you can conclude from the win: the Oklahoma stint is going, and the inside the NBA summit. Pure, Bryant will lead the offense because that is his role and, two, he will live more knowing that if he misses, Gasol or Bynum are there to clean up the mess.

It's always like watching a fight-cops when a coach feels a star has to transfer more of his teammates in the game. Jackson is clearly trying to keep the rest of the Lakers crew cooling with at least the thought of eventually they will.

However, that some Lakers were known that given license and (Bryant's) trainers relationship, the veteran coach is challenging the opposite to take more jackhorse duels with the entire rest of the playoffs in mind.

You can expect that Jackson and Bryant will attempt to isolate the scorer of Durant before Game 3 in Oklahoma. Jackson knows he will have to let Bryant fly, sending the offensive attentions on the floor as the Lakers defend their crown.

Jackson will just have to convince Bryant to pass off and trust on open teammate who's waiting feverishly in a corner when there's really no need to do the rest.

OPENING HONORS Philippine Sports Commission chair Harry Angping and top seed GM Ju Qiang (one of Pinoys on order for one-two-and moves in Thursday's opening of the 9th Asian Individual Chess Championships at the Subic Exhibition and Convention Center. Also explains are (from left) Filoil executive Bob Aboitiz, NCFP officials Bobby Cayanga, chief arbiter Mortabad Pambuenaabi's National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Prospero "Boboi" Pichay, agenda committee member Deng Tai Thong of Vietnam and NCFP executive director Willie Makalo.

SPORTSWATCH

120 fights in Pasay Sabang Net derby today

SOME 120 FIGHTS ARE SCHEDULED IN THE SABONG NET 4TH ANNIVERSARY 4-Cock Derby starting at 12 noon today at the Pasay City Cockpit.

Among those vying for the title and the P400,000 at stake are JC Bernardo, Al Madrigal, Pete Elorico, Ramon Sandico, Frank Rivera, Marcos Ilagan, Leo Moreno, Paulo Peñaflor, Bobby Bañares, James Jamora, Pete Bautista, Jose Mendoza, Ramon Bautista, Tomas Bautista, Jose Garbin, Ricardo Bautista, Tomas Bautista and Ramon Bautista.

Meanwhile, the P50,000-added Global Starmar 8-Cock International Derby finals will at the same venue on May 10 and 23 with Patrick Antonio as host.

By TOP CHOICE: Sakura Abu Park

Skills events kick off PBA All-Star bash

By Musong R. Castillo

PUERTO PRINCESA—THE GROUP ABOVE THE RIM WILL BE THE highlight today as Gilas Norwood defends his Slam Dunk title against the elite slammers of the PBA in the annual All-Star Classic faceoff which gets off the ground in this thriving coastal city.

The Rain or Shine crossmanner is not actually holding high hopes even as he welcomes former champions Jeffy Williams back in the event and pays tribute to the best he debuted to an upset of ours last year in Bacolod.

Former champion KG Canaleta of Derby Ace will be seeking to redo the event for a fourth time after his unexpected loss last year.

"Some of the stuff he did was pretty unbelievable," Norwood said of Canaleta, who makes nightstage appearances around career with the Derby Ace. "I don't think people are really realized how high he was jumping or how really difficult his dunks were."

And while he praised his opponent, Norwood refused to reveal the things that he will do for them.

"I'll probably keep things secret for now," Norwood, the league's top rookie last year, said.

Canaleta has left no stones unturned in his latest bid.

"It's going to be tough, but I am coming into this competition well-prepared," Canaleta, who in his past viewmates availed jams like the tomahawk, windmill and spinning container, said in Filipino.

Williams, meanwhile, is happy just "to be dunking again," as he makes his return to the tournament—and Sunday's centerpiece All-Star Game—after missing out last year due to a blood disorder.

Junior Jigs of the 3-Mug Derby Ace also seeks to repeat in the Three-Point Shootout as he battles nine other crack shooters that include former champions Dondon Hontiveros of Jess Miguel Beer, ArQ's Rommel Rosario, Talk 'N Text's Jimmy Alapag and Powerguy Gaudencio Oronsel Tubid.

Also challenging Tiger are Shoe-Mart 3A Toledo, Mr. Lucio's Joshua Urbanozola, Rain or Shine's Jeff Chan, Coca-Cola's Mark Macapagal and Yeoh Allstead Rambo Collier.

Defending champion Paul Artadi of Derby Ace, will pit skills with former champion Willie Miller of shanky Foxx or Shine's Mercado and ArQ's Dennis Rosario in the obstacle challenge.

On their unbeatable city playon, ends at the hunk of pickup trophy-hefting a motorcycle.

The top performer of the weekend as spotters, with him seeking to get photos with the former MVP.

WILLIAMS: Back to reclaim title

CANALETA: In contention again

Opulencia, Lopez top age-group net victors

JUAN ALFONSO OPULENCIA AND Alexander Lester Lopez of Alabang dominated their respective classes to the Two Tiers Affiliate-sponsored age-group break meet at Ayala Alabang over the weekend.

The 14-year-old Opulencia routed fourth-seed Enrique Sycip, 6-1, 6-4, to clinch the boys' 18-under title, while Lopez, 17, dumped her class-over Jessica Ortuza, 6-2, 7-5, for the girls' 18-under crown.

Marcus del Rosario and Gabriel Tumacder edged Rodolfo Villanueva and Mico Rafa, 6-4, 6-2, in the 16-under rosters doubles finals.

John Marvin del Rosario grabbed the boys' 14-under title after 6-4, 6-3 win over Jarl Lance Gumaneo, while Shanine Ollivares romped over Samantha Ceylan, 6-2, 6-0.

Berto Orendain clubbed Alyk Pangan, 6-1, 6-4, while Karsten Ortuza downed Alex Robida, 6-2, 6-3, for the 12-under crowns.

Eric Ollivares & dressed Julian Dorth, 6-2, 6-2, while Eries Mendoza upset Mats Rabor, 6-2, 6-3, for the 12-under titles.

Second seed Arthur Greg Fontanos blasted Elder Mar Danao, 6-0, 6-0, for the 10-under crown.

Kristine Ortuza whipped sister Isabela, 6-1, 6-0, for the girls' 14-under title while Mendoza stunned No. 2 seed Mats Rabor, 6-2, 6-3, to take the 12-under title.

Mike Anthony Reyes

Tough Japan training for Asiad judo bets

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NINE-TIME SOUTHEAST ASIAN GAMES champion John Baylon and three female judoka will leave for Japan in July to boost their bronze Games judo bid this November.

"The best players compete there (Japan)," said the 43-year-old Baylon, a legend in the sport but has yet to win a medal in the Asiad. "World champs spar there everyday so there's a big chance for us to sharpen our techniques."

Joining Baylon in the Japan training set at Toshiba University in Tsuzuki prefecture are Lauro BEA Gusman gold medalist Nancy Quillotes and diver and beauty medalists Ruth Engo Unga and Karen Ann Solomon, respectively.

Baylon noted that while Filipino judokas already have techniques, they need to develop fighting spirits and attitude that can only be obtained from training with Japanese kids first.

"For starters, Maribbel Batoon's best performance in an Asian level competition was a bronze medal in the 1993 Asian Championships held in Macau.

"But I am confident that with the training and exposure, with him seeking to get photos with the former MVP.

Crack jins competing in Smart meet Sunday

THE CREAM OF THE CROP IN the local cardiovascular horizon will show their wares in the 2010 Smart national pool championships starting 9 a.m. this Sunday at the Rizal Coliseum.

"Only the best jins from the Northern Capital Region and all 16 regions who are members of the Taekwondo Kukkiwon Federation-Philippines Incorporated (TKF-Inc.) and 4 of the Armed Forces.

Hosted by the Federation of Champions and co-presented by Thunderbird, the World Slasher Cup will also hold the "Slighter Ka sa World Slasher Cup" raffle promo. Four winners and a companion each from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will be picked to enjoy the event.

For details, call 09.12928 or 09.1911.01 loc. 8061 or 8081 or log on to www.smartcoolcom and www.thesmartcool.com.ph.

Among the national team participants: Hugo Barra, Ray Sanchez, Lorna Kenedy, Jeffrey Limsaysac, Jessie Javier, Glenmore Peñaro, Liezl Ubalde, Jorge Torres, Zaldy Lumbreal, Nadal Sombilo, Jeff Hidalgo, Jorge Gotis, Ray-Ray Bal-Cuevo, Chris Cortez, Ellie Ferreras, Randy Hill, Pilito Dela Cruz, Rizza Bella, Jose Escoto.

BEST RECORD

Dr. Feliciano "Fong" Lansangan II of **Run for Sight Foundation** logged in his best record in the 81st Gong Marathon 2010 (Seoul International Marathon) held in Seoul, South Korea last March 21, 2010. He completed the 42.195-km race in 2:47:20, only 17 minutes short of the qualifying time for the renowned Boston Marathon. Next on the ophthalmologist's schedule is the San Diego Rock n Roll Marathon, which will be held this June.

World Slasher Cup set May 31

CHAMPION BREEDERS FROM Mindoro will host the foreign invasion in the 2010 World Slasher Cup-2 Hawaiian Invitational 8-Cock Derby slated May 31, June 1 and 4 at the historic Coliseum.

Hosted by the Federation of Champions and co-presented by Thunderbird, the World Slasher Cup will also hold the "Slighter Ka sa World Slasher Cup" raffle promo. Four winners and a companion each from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will be

SPORTS

Former IOC president Samaranch, 89

MADRID—JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH, WHO STEERED THE OLYMPIC movement through two turbulent decades marked by political boycotts, bribery and drug scandals and a greater emphasis on commercialism, has died on Wednesday at the age of 89. Samaranch, who stepped down as International Olympic Committee president in 2001, was admitted to the Quiron clinic in his native Barcelona on Sunday with acute heart problems. **Story**

Magic seize 2-0 lead; Spurs equalize series

ORLANDO, FLORIDA—THE DYNAMIC Howard-Alonzo Carter tandem again easier's perfect but good enough to give the Orlando Magic a 92-77 win over the Charlotte Bobcats on Wednesday, and a 2-0 lead in their NBA playoff series.

Carter finished with 29 points and Howard scored 15. The Magic's star duo was less than stellar but took over when it counted most. They combined for 21 second-half points to help Orlando build a 20-point lead and hold on later.

Stephen Jackson showed an effects from his hyperextended left knee to score 27 points, and Gerald Wallace had 15 points for the Bobcats. But their 21 turnovers are a big reason why they're heading home still searching for their coach's first playoff win.

Game 3 in the best-of-seven series is Saturday in Charlotte.

"The Bobcats were more than eight minutes to start the game with only three points, and had just one field goal with six minutes during that stretch.

The first half was a grueling one for both teams, and neither could consistently hit a shot. The scrappily shorthanding J.J. Redick even badly missed the free throw from Charlotte's coach Larry Brown's technical foul in the second quarter.

The Magic got together the closest thing to a run, and then gradually eked out a 41-36 lead at half time. With Charlotte's 14 first-half turnovers, though, they could've been up more.

In Dallas, Richard Jefferson scored 17 of his 19 points in the first half to help San Antonio beat Dallas, 103-88, and tie their first-round series at a game apiece.

Jefferson, was 7 of 9 in his first seven shots, including a 12-1 surge that broke the game open for good.

Stellar Bob Kravitsky went from hardly starting in Game 1 to handily making history. He missed six of his first seven shots, and even missed a free throw after having made 88 in a row. He finished with 24 points, down from 36 in the series opener.

Game 3 is in San Antonio on Friday, and the Heat can't wait. They're especially looking forward to seeing Mavericks owner Mark Cuban, who fanned the flames of the rivalry in recent days by repeatedly saying, "I hate the Spurs."

MAVERICKS Forward Carter shoots the layup but gets foiled by Spurs forward Tim Duncan during second half action. **>>**

SEE STORY
(Charlotte/FTE)
7 a.m.—Dividend
vs Chicago (Game 3)
10 a.m.—Rosario
vs Portland (Game 3)

Fiesta merry-making is one of the most defining traits of the Filipinos. Our buoyant spirit, which readily manifests itself even in the most mundane circumstances of everyday life, bursts into unbridled proportions during local fiesta. This is why fiesta-hopping has become a convenient excuse for traveling throughout the islands to savor our myriad cultures.

When the **Aliwan Fiesta** unfolds on **April 22-24**, local residents and foreign tourists alike will witness once more the cornucopia of sights and sounds that has made the event a popular destination during the summer months. Now on its eighth year under the aegis of **Manila Broadcasting Company** and the **Cultural Center of the Philippines**, in cooperation with the Tourism committee of SM Mall of Asia, as well as the cities of Pasay and Manila, it is a grand cultural extravaganza that brings together the country's most popular festivals, showcasing Filipino revelry to the max.

Contingents from different festivals all over the country have pulled all stops to showcase the best of the regions.

Bataan, Iloilo will present a lively choreography showcasing how Moa oaks have become a gourmet delicacy through the **Kasag Festival**. South Cotabato will pay tribute to the **T'nalak Dreamweavers** through their float. The people of Santacruzan in Pateng, Maguindanao will reenact the **Halalad festival** to show the harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in their community. Tarsum, Leyte's **Pataka Festival** will manifest the townsfolk's strong resolve to surmount all odds while clinging to their faith, and will highlight skateboarding as the town's claim to fame.

From the Cordillera Administrative Region, Baguio City's **Panagbenga** will showcase the myriad blooms for which the City of Pines has become famous. The people of Marilao, Bulacan who celebrate the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, will present a harvest festival called **Halamang Dilim**, anchored on the yellow turmeric ginger variety which is in demand for culinary specialties. Kabulow from Mabalacat, Pampanga's **Cuyugan Festival** will celebrate traditional Arts culture. Fiesta time in Tondo, Manila which is anchored on the Santo Nino, will give a preview of the **Lakbayan festival**, even as Tribu Pagtubtot of the **Dinagyang festival** will portray the life of the Ati prior to their introduction to the Santo Nino.

From Pandakaan, Cagayan we will see a dance depicting the movements of a native bird that plays a vital role in their harvest rites called the **Kiling-Kingan festival**.

Cebu has opted to represent the **Sinulog festival** with a stylized float using indigenous materials and calling it the King of Kings. The delegation from Pasig City presents the **Pahiyas festival**, celebrated on New Year's Eve, which focuses on the lifestyle of the early residents of Sarmiento district. Cotabato has prepared a colorful fluidic called **Ipat**, displaying traditional hairdresses of the ordinance. Mariveles's **Lapay Bandjao Dance Festival** will showcase Bicolano culture, traditions, and values. The grand festivity of **Pukawatjan** - a Maguindanaoan word for celebration -- will be depicted by townsfolk from Malapatan, Sarangani.

Bulacan's renowned regional **Singkaban** tradition will be highlighted in tandem with the lush vegetation of Gregorio's **Halamunan festival**. To showcase the **Pedzag-Pedzag festival**, students from Pateng National High School will feature a dance anchored on a Maguindanaoan epic. Iloilo's annual **Paroe-Regatta** will also be represented. Catabato City, in turn, will display the betrothal rituals of the **Kanggalpas**.

Caloocan City will resume historicity through the Monumento Shrine, to support its contingent showcasing the **Pajotan festival**. The delegation from Catanauan, Quezon will recount their pre-Centro merry-making in the **Bolog-Bolog Festival**, just as the Chavacanos took audiences to the Subanon rituals in the **Zamboanga Hermosa festival**. The municipality of Shariff Aguak joins us with their float called the **Kaglawing sa Magindanaon**, named after one of their most elaborate festivals. As their inspiration, some of the country's loveliest young ladies will ride their floats and compete in the search for Festival Queen, traditionally called the "**Reyna ng Aliwan**."

Amid this kaleidoscope of colors, amateur and professional photographers are expected to take their best shots during the grand parade on April 24 for the Aliwan Fiesta photo competition. Kick off point is behind the SM Mall of Asia, outside in the Aliw Theater outdoor stage at the CCP Complex, where a star-studded awarding ceremony and fireworks display will cap the festivities.

The **Aliwan Fiesta** will also feature a shoppers bazaar along Sotto Street at the CCP Complex, which will be anchored on the "One Town, One Product" campaign enabling visitors to bring home unique *pasalubong* from the provinces.

For further enquiries, call 832-4125, email ctarcegui@mbcradio.net or log onto www.aliwanfiesta.com.ph.

IN THIS ISSUE
- **Stockbrokers seek TRO** against PSE election rule /B4
- **Ecozone export** earnings up 49% in Q1 /B5

Editor Raul D. Pangalangan • Assistant Editor Carmela S. Montoya
BUSINESS

Gov't eyes $1B from ADB for 2010 projects

Target sectors: Social services, agriculture, environment

By Reynel M. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS IN TALKS WITH THE ASIAN DEvelopment Bank on $1.06 billion worth of project financing for 2010, according to officials at the National Economic and Development Authority.

Jonathan L. Uy, director of the bank's public investment staff, said in an interview that the package covered two program loans and four investment loans.

Rolando G. Tungpalan, Neda deputy director general, said discussions to be reached on improving business processes.

"We are aiming for projects that will provide better efficiency without sacrificing quality," Tungpalan said, adding that the Neda-assessed projects that would be released "regardless of any change in

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Malaya plant draws 4 bidders

PSALM sets auction of IPPA deal

By Amy R. Remo

AT LEAST FOUR COMPANIES HAVE EXPRESSED interest to bid for the management of the independent power producer administrator (IPPA) contract for the 650-megawatt Malaya thermal power plant, according to the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

PSALM vice president Conrad Tolentino said these companies submitted letters of interest to the bid for the deadline last Wednesday. He declined to name the prospective bidders.

So far, only publicly listed Pacific Inc. had disclosed its intention to bid for the Malaya facility.

"The company's participation in this bid is another significant division in line with its purpose to expand business opportunities into power-related activities," Pacific said in a previous disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Aside from Pacific, publicly listed Transasia Oil and Energy Development Corp. had earlier expressed interest in bagging the IPPA contract.

The bidding for the IPPA of the Malaya power plant will be held on June 16.

Bidding packages will be issued from April 26 to 30. Prospective investors can conduct due diligence from April 14 until two business days prior to the bid submission deadline. A pre-bid conference will be held on May 13.

A two-envelope bidding system will be adopted. Interested parties will be required to post a bid security of $10 million in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit.

Korea Electric Power Corp., through its Philippine subsidiary Kepco Philippines, currently operates the Malaya thermal power plant. It won a 15-year rehabilitate-operate-manage-maintain contract in June 1995. The contract ends this year.

The plant rehabilitation was completed 10 months earlier with the recovery of its original rated generation capacity of 600 MW and with the improvement of its thermal efficiency by an average of 4.5 percent.

The 20-year-old power plant supplies electricity to Bulacan, Rizal and Laguna.

Mining firms qualify for Diwalwal bid

By Rica T. Dalisanda

PHILEX MINING CORP., THE COUNTRY'S largest miner, is one of four companies that pre-qualified to bid for the right to develop and operate a 729-hectare property within the mined gold rank area at the Diwalwal mineral reservation in Compostela Valley.

According to a notice posted on the website of state-run Philippine Mining Development Corp. (PMDC), the three others are APC Group Inc./Scott Chain Resources Inc.; Canonad Nickel Corp.; and infrastructure giant FF Cruz & Co., Inc.

Philex was among nine companies that earlier expressed interest in what could be the richest parcel of the gold rush Diwalwal mineral reservation.

PMDC said that the nine firms had obtained pre-qualification documents for the 729-ha parcel.

Aimee T. De Veyra, vice president of PMDC, said earlier that there is a high level of interest for the parcel because it was the center of the gold rush in Mt. Diwalwal.

"Based on drill holes...21 underground holes and one surface hole—the estimated gold ore resource for 729 is almost 1 million ounces. That's just from 21 drill holes," he said.

Philex is the country's biggest miner and based on its previous disclosures, its shipments in 2009 had a total estimated value of P6.56 billion at world metal prices contained in ores.

Meanwhile, FF Cruz, a prominent construction firm, had pre-qualified for the bidding of the latter's property last year and the adjacent 1,350-ha Higanteng Bato parcel this year, however, it did not submit proposals for either.

FF president Felipe F. Cruz told the business that while it is more well-known to infrastructure, the company is also capable of going into mining. He said FF Cruz has made arrangements with indigenous people to help development Tribal Mining Areas (Tribes).

Tribes are parcels within the mineral reservation that the PMDC awarded to indigenous groups such as the Manobos, Mandayas, Mangyangans and Obolawons.

The 8,100-ha Mt. Diwalwal Mineral Reservation is divided into five portions. There have been auctioned off and the 729 parcel is next in the auction block.

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An impotent election audit

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

UNTIL NOW, THE COMELEC HAS MAINtained its position that the audit of the computer vote count will be done after, not before, the proclamation of winning candidates. As the lawyers say: "Ano pa ang pupuntahan ng dalawang linggo sa ang kahuyan."

Adjectives/qualifiers submitted by accountants on the random manual audit law Feb. 11, at almost three months ago. This letter gained added credibility because it had inputs from well-respected professionals such as Mahar Mangahas, Jacqui Sánchez Benitez, president, and Raissa Robles, founder of SCI's computerized election.

Despite the request of Cebuano oversight committee (COC) cochair, Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., that Comelec respond to this letter at the subsequent COC hearing, there has been no response.

Three infirmities

The Web 11 letter recommended that the sample of machines used for the random manual audit be increased from 1/4 of 1 percent to at least 5 percent. The Comelec has since increased this sample size to 1 1/4 percent. This is still too small for such an important exercise.

A second infirmity is that the procedure for the random manual audit is being decided upon at the very last minute. This allows too little time to correct any defective procedure. As Hue Mangahas said: "Though the quantity of the sample is important, the quality of the sampling procedure is much more crucial." With only one week and three days to go before elections, many are not yet satisfied with the sampling procedure.

But the greatest infirmity is that the audit will not affect the proclamation of winning candidates. If the audit of the computer count shows that the count was defective, it will be too late. The proclamation would have been made, and one then just be taxed as a basis for protest. In our experience, we know how long these protests take.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." It would have been far better for the audit to be carried as a preventive, rather than a corrective, measure. If the audit shows that the computer count is wrong, then the manual count should be used. The correct winner should then be proclaimed, which appears to be just

COMMENTARY

CONTINUED FROM B1

Solution by IT professionals

The current Comelec proposed procedure of using only 1.25 percent of the population as the sample size, adopting a sampling procedure that is subject to question, and worst, a decision for the audit to be done after, not before, proclamation has been made this proposed audit procedure practically impotent.

The IT professionals have instead suggested a manual count in 100 percent of the precincts favoring only on those positions the president, vice president and a third official selected at random from governor, mayor or congressman.

If the manual count is similar to the computer count, this adds only a few hours to the targeted three days using automation. The prior 42-day period using a totally manual system would still be only three days using the automation process. But if the manual count for these three positions does not match the computer count, then a manual count has to be undertaken for all positions. This may take us some four days.

Nevertheless, the resulting seven days would still be much shorter than the 42 days using the previous totally manual system. This is because the transmission from the canvassing center to the national headquarters will be done electronically, not manually.

Five 'presidentiables'

As of this writing, five presidential candidates have signed the statement that supports this proposed system of 100 percent precinct manual count for only three positions. They are former President Joseph Estrada, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, Eddie Villanueva, Bicanca Pichay, and JC de los Reyes. Surely, they are not all wrong!

We recommend that the Comelec similarly adopt this position. This kind of work done before proclamation will add credibility to our elections. The result will then not be a protectable issue in protests. It will instead be a potent force for increasing confidence in our electoral system and strengthening our democracy.

The author is chair of Agrimatch, former secretary for presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail ejrtsantiago@yahoo.com or telephone (02) 8522112.

Gov't eyes $1B from ADB for 2010 projects

Pronouncement

the ad hoc review."

Uy said the requested ADB funding would include at least $400 million worth of conditional cash transfers or "social protection support," which may be increased to $500 million.

Another $400 million under discussion would fund projects related to the integrated management of natural resources, development of roads, enhancement of irrigation systems operations, and an renewable energy and climate change.

Some $250 million in funding is also being considered for the financial management sector, particularly on the regulation of the financial markets.

"[The improvement of Finance] will make a strong case for [the Philippines] to get a good allocation," Uy said. "Our aim is for a robust and effective pipeline" for this year.

Documents from the books showed that the amount of funds released from official development assistance (ODA) was 131 percent year-on-year or $2.61 billion in 2009 mainly due to the availability of loans aid.

A report from the Neda's project monitoring staff showed that last year's disbursements topped the $1.01 billion released in 2008.

"The significant increase in disbursements is largely attributed to the release of five program loans amounting to $1.61 billion funded by the ADB and the World Bank," the report said.

In 2009, the biggest source of ODA was Japan, accounting for 36 percent of total commitments. The ADB was second with 23 percent, World Bank, 18 percent, and China, four percent.

In 2010, the government plans to avail itself of $1.49 billion in ODA for program loans and $761 million for project loans.

PhilWeb posts 52% profit growth in Q1

By Paolo G. Montecillo

LOCALLY LISTED GAMING AND technology firm PhilWeb Corp. grew earnings by more than half in the first quarter of 2009 on the back of stronger sales, setting the company well on its way to securing its goal of posting a net profit of P1 billion this year.

In a statement, the company said it generated a net income of P153 million for the first three months of 2010, 52 percent higher than the P99 million it made in the same period last year. Revenues, which went up 42 percent year on year, stood at P529 million compared to P368 million last year.

"We are confident that 2010 will be another banner year for PhilWeb and are happy that the results of the first quarter show that our business plans are progressing very solidly," PhilWeb president Dennis Valdes said.

Valdes attributed the continued growth of the company's core businesses to improvements in Pagcor (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.) e-Games ex Dogs cold operations, as well as the opening of new outlets since the beginning of the year, bringing the total to 177 as recently.

The launch of the new online game "House Flip" also boosted revenues. "Eleven growth in House Flip is very healthy and we foresee that this product will be a major contributor to revenues within this year," Valdes said.

He said its bet volume and daily player statistics showed double-digit increases versus last year.

St. Luke's inks MOA with Siliman Medical Center

St. Luke's Medical Center, the country's premier medical institution, and Siliman Medical Center have agreed to collaborate to provide world-class healthcare to their patients.

During the signing of the memorandum of agreement between the two hospitals at the Siliman Medical Center in Dumaguete City last March 10, both hospitals agreed that the primary objective of this partnership is expertise development.

"This partnership is part of St. Luke's National Medical Referral Program where the main objective is to enter partnerships with tertiary medical institutions in the provinces," explained Dr. Jason R. Cuaneng, Chief Medical Officer and SVP for Medical Affairs of St. Luke's Medical Center.

"It further the exchange of knowledge, skills and expertise between St. Luke's and Siliman. St. Luke's will provide speakers for continuing medical education activities and joint conferences. Physicians from Siliman will also be invited to St. Luke's-led international conferences."

Under the agreement, Siliman can refer highly specialized cases to St. Luke's medical experts in the various fields of specialization. These referrals could mean the physical transfer of cases from Siliman to St. Luke's or case discussion through telemedicine.

Patients can also be referred to St. Luke's for specialized diagnostic procedures like Positron Emission Tomography-Computed Tomography (PET-CT) scan or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and for advanced laboratory procedures like drug assay.

"We are here to provide our provincial partners with the services that are not available in their hospital," Dr. Cuaneng said. "This is our way of sharing our expertise and resources with patients based in the provinces."

Siliman's physicians will also benefit from the collaboration with St. Luke's. Consultant physicians from Siliman can apply for visiting privileges at St. Luke's while their resident physicians may apply for special rotation privileges.

For her part, Dr. Juanita Du-Amalong, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Siliman Medical Center, described the cooperative agreement with St. Luke's as "providential" and "a partnership made in heaven."

"When we were crafting our five-year strategic plan for 2008 to 2013, one of the strategies that we considered is to expand our client base and our service reach was to establish institutional linkages with what we termed as upstream hospitals," she added. "Upstream hospitals are centers of medical service excellence where we could refer patients who needed more specialized treatment and required more advanced diagnostic services which are not available in our hospital."

For Dr. Amalong, St. Luke's was a top candidate for this and when they were exploring ways to get hold of the right person to talk to, it was St. Luke's that made the first move to discuss the relationship that Siliman was starting from the very beginning.

"I believe this cooperative relationship with St. Luke's Medical Center is a paradigm that will help meet the challenges of a rapidly changing environment in healthcare," she said.

Dr. Jason R. Cuaneng, Chief Medical Officer and SVP for Medical Affairs of St. Luke's Medical Center (second from right) shakes the hand of Roberto O. Montelibano, President and Administrator of Siliman Medical Center (second from left), after signing the Memorandum of Agreement. Looking on are, from left, Dr. Nena T. Reyes, VP and Medical Director of Siliman Medical Center; Dr. Juanita D. Amalong, Chairman, Board of Directors, Siliman Medical Center and Ray V. Dimaano, Associate Director for Business Development, St. Luke's Medical Center

Stockbrokers seek TRO against PSE election rule

By Doris C. Dumlao

PROMISORS ARE HOPPING AHEAD of the May 1 annual board elections and shareholders' meeting of the Philippine Stock Exchange as stockbrokers have gone to court to challenge the 20-percent cap on their respective voting rights.

The Philippine Association of Securities Brokers and Dealers Inc. (PASBED), which has all trading participants as members, asked the Regional Trial Court of Pasig City to issue a temporary restraining order and injunction against the implementation by the Securities and Exchange Commission, the PSE's nomination and election committee (Nomelec) and the PSE itself of this year's election guidelines.

The guidelines were drafted to conform to the SEC order dated March 6 requiring the PSE to limit starting this year, and every year thereafter, the voting rights of brokers to 20 percent. The order was based on the Securities Regulation Code of 2000, which states that

20% cap set on voting rights

no single industry should own more than 20 percent of the organized exchange.

Out of the PSE's 20.49 million outstanding shares, about 35 percent are still held by brokers. This has already been reduced from 100 percent under the demutualization process required by law.

The PSE converted into a stock corporation in 2001 and continued to the demutualization members of the SEC, listed its capital stock on its own bourse by way of introduction in 2003. The PSE was converted from a non-stock organization owned by members/brokers to a stock corporation owned by diversified shareholders. The ownership of shares in the PSE was also segregated from the ownership of trading rights at the exchange, alongside many other provisions in the SEC that seek to prevent stock price manipulation.

A source stockbroker said that if the SEC were to be strict in enforcing the 20-percent single-industry limit under the SEC, then it should not only apply to the stock brokerage industry. The stockbroker insisted that the other major industry—as represented by the San Miguel Retirement Fund, PLDT Beneficial Trust and the Government Service Insurance System—also controlled more than 20 percent of the shares and voting rights in the exchange.

"If the intention of the 20-percent single-industry limit were to prevent abuses, the broker noted that other sectors—especially entities affiliated with corporate owners...could likewise exercise control.

Wider bank deposit inquiry

WITH THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION drawn to the coming elections, the rules on confidentiality of bank deposits were quietly loosened up.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently signed into law Republic Act No. 10021, or the "Exchange of Information on Tax Matters Act of 2009."

The law aims to meet the government's commitment in international tax treaties to exchange information with its treaty partners to help combat international tax evasion and avoidance.

It will be recalled that last year, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Malaysia and Uruguay were blacklisted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as tax haven that refuse to enter into anti-money laundering deals.

The consequences of the blacklist are hefty monetary sanctions and strict scrutiny of international banking transactions (with no assurance of communication) of the countries concerned.

Considering our treasury's dependence on foreign exchange remittances of Filipinos living or working abroad, removal from the blacklist was imperative.

Under the new law, the tax authority of a treasury may form a tax treaty with the Philippines or is a party to an international tax convention to which Philippines is also member can ask for information from the BIR about Philippine-based taxpayers under investigation in that country.

Raul J. Fababrica

Information

The nationality of the taxpayer is immaterial. What matters is the person, or entity involved is covered by our tax laws.

On the basis of that request or information, and assuming all the procedural requirements have been complied with, the BIR commissioner is authorized to look into the bank deposits and other related information about that taxpayer to banks and financial institutions.

To prevent the taxpayer from whimsical investigations, the law requires the requesting country to establish that the request is in conformity with its laws and administrative practices.

It should also affirm that it has exhausted all legal means available in its own territory to obtain the information, except those that would give rise to disproportionate difficulties." Following international convention on exchange of information, these information have to be taken at their face value and given full faith and credence.

In fairness enough to the taxpayer concerned, the BIR commissioner is obliged to inform him of that request.

Disclosure

The bank or financial institution upon whom the request is served has to open its records under pain of monetary and penal sanctions.

To avoid the inconvenience of dilly-dallying in complying with the request, the law requires the commission to the foreign country as soon as possible of the information sought.

If the BIR commissioner is unable to do so within 90 days from receipt of the request due to some obstacles encountered or refusal of the holder of the information to release it, he has to immediately inform the requesting country of the situation and explain the nature of such obstacles or the reasons for the refusal.

Although the information is intended primarily for the use of the requesting country, the law, wisely enough, makes it available to the BIR "for tax assessment, verification, audit and enforcement purposes."

Meaning, the BIR can use the information to check if the taxpayer has been truthful with his tax filings and paid the right amount of taxes. A common finding can be basis for the financial benefit of the erring taxpayer.

Inquiries

The law also lifted the veil of confidentiality over bank deposits for cases involving the settlement of the estates of deceased persons.

To determine the gross estate for taxability of the monetary assets and personal and real properties of a decedent, the BIR commissioner has been authorized to inquire into his bank deposits and other related information held by banks and financial institutions.

Obviously, the grant of authority is aimed at increasing the collection of income and donors taxes that, considering the number of ultra-rich people who kicked the bucket in recent years, have been pitifully low.

The paper read that the information held by banks and financial institutions on this score will be helpful in tracing the movement of the bank deposits and other assets of the deceased during his lifetime and after he expired.

Going one step further, the law also empowers the BIR commissioner to authorize the examination of any taxpayer who apply or compromise settlement of their tax liabilities due to incapacity to pay.

It is not enough to plead lack of money. The claims of financial distress should be backed by the taxpayers' waiver of the confidentiality over his bank deposits.

Armed with that waiver, the BIR commissioner can look into the taxpayer's bank records to verify the validity of the "poverty" claim.

While this reverse legislative translates into a big inroad into the confidentiality of bank deposits are no longer limited to written permission of the depositor, impeachment cases, bribery or dereliction of duty cases, bank deposits under litigation, and violations of the Anti-Money Laundering Act.

Phinma to open Microtel in MOA

THE PHINMA GROUP IS SET to open its ninth no-frills hotel under leading international lodging chain Dutchtee Microtel at the SM Mall of Asia complex near the SMX convention center later this month.

The 153-room Microtel in MOA is part of the Phinma group's plan to open two to three new hotels in the country each year and gain a foothold in every province, Business Consolidated Industries Inc. president Ramon del Rosario Jr. said in a roundtable discussion with the Inquirer business staff.

BCE, which will be renamed Phinma Corp. soon to reflect the group's divestment from Dusit Thani's resort business, a long time ago, owns the company that holds this master franchise for Microtel in the country as well as the local operation of the hotel chain.

The Microtel in MOA is about three times bigger than the other Microtel inns in the country. Other local Microtel inns are in Baguio, Batangas, Boracay, Cabanatuan, Cebu, Davao, Palawan and Tacloban.

The group is upbeat on the prospects of the latest Microtel in MOA. "It's very nicely located, it's very near SMX and for a while it will be the only hotel in that area," Del Rosario said.

Most Microtel properties in the country charge P3,000-P4,000 a night for a double room. A typical room has a 30-square-meter footprint with LCD TV with cable channels, Internet access and entrepreneur-approved mattresses.

"The principle is focused on comfortable and safe rooms. No food and beverage is the typical model but it's always nicely located so you can walk within a few minutes to all these places. That allows us to construct it as a reasonable cost and run it with a really small staff," Del Rosario explained. Doris C. Dumlao

Stock rally continues

LOCAL STOCKS REBOUNDED FOR THE second straight day yesterday on gain investing sentiment, allowing the main share index to stay above the 3,200 mark.

The Philippine Stock Exchange index gained another 33.1 points or 1 percent to finish at 3,237.57.

All sectors were up except for the mining-oil sub-index, which slumped 1 percent. There were 83 advancers against 68 decliners and 61 unchanged stocks at a value turnover of P3.12 billion.

Investors stepped up shares of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Banco de Oro Unibank Inc., Energy Development Corp., Universal Robina Corp., International Container Terminal Services Inc., Ayala Corp., Ayala Land Inc., SM Prime Holdings Inc., SM Investments Corp. and Security Bank Corp.

On the other hand, First Philippine Holdings Corp., Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Megaworld Corp., Vista Land and Lifescapes Inc. and Philex Mining Corp. ended in the red.

SPI Securities said that while the market had shown remarkable resilience, it remains to be seen if the market would maintain its consolidation above 3200. "However, the recent increased volatility is a matter of concern," it said. Doris C. Dumlao

Ecozone export earnings up 49% in 1st quarter

By Abigail L. Ho

Rise in investments said to generate 653,851 new jobs

AUTH EQUITMENTS IN THE FIRST quarter soaring 111 percent, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority likewise reported a rise in export earnings by 48.8 percent to almost $9.8 billion in the January-March period.

Peza data showed that in the same quarter last year, exports amounted to only $6.4 billion.

Of the total export earnings clocked up in the first three months, $6 billion, or more than $0.5 billion, came from private economic zones. Public economic zones contributed another $1.8 billion, while information technology parks and buildings added another $879.1 million to the export haul.

In terms of employments, the first quarter also proved to be a strong period. It registered a net increase of 653,851 jobs. This was an increase of 14.6 percent better than the 560,666 jobs generated in the same period a year ago.

As with exports, most of the new jobs came from private ecozones at 309,941, followed by IT parks and buildings at 210,379. Public ecozones brought up the rear with 133,631 new jobs.

During the month, Peza director general Lilia de Lima stated in a report to Trade Secretary Jesli Lapus that investments in the first three months of the year surged 111 percent to P20.06 billion from P13.67 billion in the same period last year.

One of Peza projects, she said, involved Slider Precision Philippines Corp. Its P1.52-billion project included the establishment of a facility that would manufacture ball-bearing bearing parts for medical engineering technology.

The facility is to be located at the Laguna Technopark Special Economic Zone, is expected to generate 1,564 jobs once average export sales ream at around $20 million.

The Japanese hard disk drive manufacturer had earlier committed an additional investment of P12 billion to fund the production capacity expansion of its local manufacturing plants.

The company currently has three production sites in Ayala Southpark and a manufacturing facility at the Subic Bay Freeport.

Bangko Sentral keeps key rates at all-time low

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS decided to keep its key policy rates at historic lows during the Monetary Board meeting yesterday.

The overnight borrowing and lending rates of the BSP still stand at 4 and 6 percent, respectively.

Nonetheless, the Monetary Board decided to reduce the ceiling budget for reimbursal loans from P40 billion to the pre-crisis level of P30 billion effective May 3.

The move was anchored on observations that the economic recovering from last year's slowdown would no longer need a boost in liquidity from the reimbursing facility.

Under the facility, banks may borrow from the BSP at an interest equivalent to the discounted value of its securities. The BSP requires borrowing banks to back these loans with short-term securities.

"The Monetary Board's decision to lower key policy rates[] was based on the latest baseline projections, which show that while inflation becomes more somewhat risen, the inflation path remains within target for 2010 and 2011," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said in a press conference yesterday held after the board meeting.

But Tetangco also said that, "in light of favorable credit and liquidity conditions, and to reduce potential inflationary risks, the Monetary Board decided to further reduce the peso rediscounting window."

In the same press conference, BSP assistant governor Ma. Cyd Tantiangco said the main source of the BSP were based on its new inflation estimate.

The BSP now expects inflation to hit an average of 3.1 percent in 2010, higher than its earlier assumption of 4.04 percent. For 2011, the central bank sees inflation averaging at 3.7 percent, higher than the previous forecast of 3.26 percent, she said.

The other key questions of the central bank chief is how the economic recovery proves within targeted levels. Monetary officials said if would keep policies aimed at helping pump-prime growth of the economy as long as such a move would not cause inflation to breach official inflation targets.

Low interest rates help boost credit, consumption, investments, and the overall growth of the economy. Because of that, it tends to push demand and inflation. The BSP said inflation could breach the 4 percent ceiling for the year as a result of the government's pump-priming initiatives. But it also said inflation would remain within the official target.

According to the BSP's forecast, inflation over the year may range from 3.5 to 5.5 percent. For next year, inflation may come in between 3 and 5 percent.

The BSP implemented a series of interest rate cuts from December 2008 to July 2009 due to a global economic crisis, which last year took a turn for the worse. The rate cuts totaled 200 basis points.

Michelle V. Ramos

Aboitiz unit to boost power generation capacity in '10

ABOITIZ POWER CORP. SAID ITS power generation capacity would expand further this year with the expected acquisition of new power generation facilities and completion of its greenfield power projects.

In a filing with the Philippine Stock Exchange, APC disclosed that as of end-2009, the company's total attributable generating capacity surged by a hefty 202 percent to 1,745 MW from 578 MW the previous year.

According to APC, the capacity will further increase with the completion of two 49-megawatt diesel-powered power-plants, with a combined generating capacity of 200 MW. Total purchase price for both facilities reached $80 million, which the company had paid in full upon rollover.

For the first quarter of 2010, APC, through wholly owned subsidiary Therma Marine, acquired ownership of 178.1 M in Gamboa in Subic and 55 117 in Aparri del Norte.

By May this year, the company expects its fossil conclusion work for the 45.2-MW hydropower plant in Sibulan, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur, through its subsidiary Hedcor Sibulan.

The facilities, which consisted of two run-of-the-river hydropower generating facilities tapping the Sibulan and Baguio rivers, are expected to generate annual revenues of $12.2 million, with revenues of clean and emissions-free energy each year.

Commercial operation of the first plant, which has a capacity of 26 MW, started in March 2010, while The second plant, with a capacity of 16.5 MW, is expected to begin new month.

Meanwhile, the 246-MW coal-fired power plant in Toledo City, Cebu, which is a joint venture with Abaitland, Group's Global Business Power Corp. and Cebu-based Visayan Energy Corp. of the Garcia Group, will be completed this year. APC has an effective share of 29 percent in the project.

APC also reported that the company, together with its partner SN Power Invest 60 (SN Power), would refurbish into the 75-MW Ambuklao and 100-MW Binga hydroelectric plants.

Following refurbishment work, the Ambuklao facility may expand an increase in capacity to 105 MW, while that of the Binga plant may go up to 120 MW.

Amy R. Remo

ATI predicts strong growth despite jitters on global trade

By Paolo G. Montecillo

LOCAL PORT OPERATOR ASIAN TERminals Inc. (ATI) expects to post robust double-digit growth in profits on the back of the improvement in domestic and international trade conditions.

However, doubts over the sustainability of the world's economic recovery may still drag the company's growth down, officials cautioned.

"So far things are going relatively well compared to the past two to three months, it [ATI] has really picked up," ATI chairman Enrique Yabut said.

Last year, ATI posted a net income of P1.10 billion, along 36% percent from year-ago levels, despite the downturn in global trade activity that negatively affected the flow of goods in and out of the Philippines.

This year, the company expects to do better as its busiest project, the phase two of the Port of Batangas container terminal, starts to contribute to revenues.

ATI is under the 25-year contract to manage and develop the Batangas port, which is being primed to an alternative to the crowded ports of Manila. Batangas is also easier to access for electronics exporters operating in the Southern Luzon area.

ATI already operates phase one of the Batangas port.

Meanwhile, the company also said it would spend P2 billion of its current P1.2-billion capital expenditure program for the expansion of the Manila South Harbor.

Officials declined to give definite projections for growth in 2010, but when asked on whether the company expects to sustain a double-digit growth in its profits that it achieved last year, Ms. Luisa Hegedus, ATI vice president for finance, said: "All indications show that there will be opportunity in that."

But the company doubted that its bottom line remained at the mercy of the conditions of global economic condition, which destroy the movement of local trade.

"This year is still difficult to predict," it said.

ATI is controlled by Manila International Container Terminal Services Inc., a unit of the group that operates the container port and marine school chain, ITS. But the port developer is also backed by the United Arab Emirates-based Dubai Ports World.

Ayala offers preferred shares with voting rights

By Doris C. Dumlao

AYALA CORP. WILL OFFER TO EXISTing shareholders next month a series of voting preferred shares to boost liquidity, allowing it to further engage in mergers and acquisitions.

Ayala Corp. yesterday told the Philippine Stock Exchange that its board of directors had approved the offering of 200 million voting preferred shares at a par value of P1 a share.

Each Ayala shareholder is entitled to subscribe to a voting preferred share for every 2.482 common shares held as of record date May 4 this year.

Issuing the shares to existing shareholders, rather than to the public, would not expand the undistribution of free million unissued Ayala common shares with a par value of P10 a share to create the new series of 200 million voting preferred shares with a par value of P1 per share.

If the Securities and Exchange Commission approves the issuance of voting preferred shares by May 8, the offer period will be held between May 14 to 20 that year, the disclosure said.

The new voting preferred shares will allow existing shareholders to hold a right that guarantees their equity ownership percentage in Ayala, on top of their equity interest.

The dividend rate on preferred shares will be equal to the three-year benchmark interest rate at the local money market PHIREX on issue date, payable annually and tapered every three years.

These voting preferred shares...exhibit are given preference over common stocks in the distribution of dividends—are not convertible into common shares.

In separating the company's stock liquidity, Ayala has also obtained a new level with which to engage in future merger and acquisition (M&A) deals via share or asset swap as an alternative to outright cash transactions.

During the stockholders' meeting, Ayala chair and chief executive officer Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala explained that the issuance of these voting preferred stocks would allow the conglomerate to use stocks to engage in M&A deals.

The Ayala conglomerate has interests in property, banking, telecommunications, electronics, infrastructure, manufacturing, business process outsourcing, and automotive businesses.

ATI predicts strong growth despite jitters on global trade

By Paolo G. Montecillo

LOCAL PORT OPERATOR ASIAN TERminals Inc. (ATI) expects to post robust double-digit growth in profits on the back of the improvement in domestic and international trade conditions.

However, doubts over the sustainability of the world's economic recovery may still drag the company's growth down, officials cautioned.

"So far things are going relatively well compared to the past two to three months, it [ATI] has really picked up," ATI chairman Enrique Yabut said.

Last year, ATI posted a net income of P1.10 billion, along 36% percent from year-ago levels, despite the downturn in global trade activity that negatively affected the flow of goods in and out of the Philippines.

This year, the company expects to do better as its busiest project, the phase two of the Port of Batangas container terminal, starts to contribute to revenues.

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Meralco raises 2010 capex budget to ₱11B

MANILA ELECTRIC CO., THE COUNtry's biggest power distributor, has raised its capital expenditure budget for 2010 to P11.0102 billion to further improve its services to some 4.6 million customers.

In a filing with the Philippine Stock Exchange, Meralco said its capex budget is "geared to support projects on areas with large concentrations of core customers and to give priority to correction of system deficiencies in the system."

The P11 billion budget will likewise be used for projects aiming to "secure a feeding health of existing facilities and initiate practical and cost-effective projects to correct system deficiencies."

Of the amount, some P5.86 billion would be committed for distribution services, P696 million for distribution construction, P676 million for regulated retail services, P302 million for the transferred subtransmission assets, and P52 million for related business activities.

Meralco had likewise earmarked P96 million for miscellaneous projects and P5.62 billion for other capital items.

According to the utility, funding of capital expenditures will be sourced substantially from internally generated cash flows, and loan savings from local and foreign financial institutions.

Meralco, however, is optimistic that investments in its system through much needed capital expenditure projects and cost program is of primordial importance since this ensures the level of quality service expected by its customers," the company explained.

It further said that Meralco is required by the Energy Regulatory Commission to file necessary steps, including making necessary capital expenditures, to build and maintain its systems so as to meet customers' performance and service requirements.

In any event, Meralco is likewise expected to make capital expenditures in each quarter at least equal to the amount of depreciation taken in the prior years, the company said.

For 2010, Meralco earlier said planned to commit at least P61 billion and a little over P11 billion for its capital and operating expenditure budget, respectively, as it prepares for an expected increase in electricity sales this year.

Amy R. Remo

ADB hiked financing in '09 to boost economies

By Michelle V. Ramos

FINANCING APPROVED BY THE ASIAN Development Bank to member countries rose in 2009 as governments required more funds to pump-prime economies amid the global economic turmoil.

In a statement, ADB reported that it approved $16.1 billion worth of financial assistance to member countries last year, up 42 percent from $11.3 billion in the previous year.

The ability of ADB to increase the amount of assistance it extends came after its capital was tripled to a record $165 billion, expanding the biggest amount of capital hike in 15 years.

The board of ADB approved the capital increase, agreeing that much more official development assistance was needed to ease the ill effects of the global economic crunch that battered Asia. The decision to raise more capital was prompted by studies showing that poverty reduction efforts in the region were hampered by the crisis.

"The global economic crisis prostrated developing Asia and the Pacific with one of the most challenging years since the 1997-'98 Asian financial crisis," ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda said.

According to estimates by the ADB, 71 million Asian living less than $2 a day could have been lifted out of poverty if growth rates had stayed at 2007 levels.

In 2009, developing Asian countries are expected to record 6.2 percent, which ADB said was the slowest rate in eight years. Most of the countries in the region posted first-hand growth.

The ADB pictures slowed down to a growth of only 0.9 percent from 3.8 percent in 2008 and 7.2 percent in 2007.

ADB said Asia was able to perform relatively better than other regions in terms of weathering the effects of the crisis. This was partly attributed to higher public spending by governments, some of which depended partly on official development assistance from multilateral agencies like the ADB.

The $16.1 billion in financing from the ADB last year was accumulated due by $14.3 billion worth of loans and grants, $397 million worth of guarantees, $650 million worth of trade finance facilitation program, $120 million for equity investments, and $267 million in technical assistance.

Mariveles coal plant to be linked to Luzon power grid

By Amy R. Remo

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMmission has allowed the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines to construct facilities that will connect GN Power Mariveles Coal Plant Ltd.'s 600-megawatt coal power plant to the Luzon grid.

In its decision, the ERC said the connection assets are essential to delivery of power from the generation facility, which will be completed in August 2012, to the Luzon grid.

The NGCP is expected to spend P908.7 million for the construction of 10 kilometers 230-kilovolt transmission line to connect GNPower's coal power plant to the Luzon grid at the Limay 1 substation.

It would also fund the construction of a 0.4-km transmission line to provide power during the testing and commissioning period of GNPower's facility prior to completion of the said transmission line, as well as the upgrade of the Limay 1 substation to accommodate the connection of the generation facility.

NGCP has signed in January this year a Connection Asset Construction and Maintenance Agreement with GN Power for the particular project.

Under the agreement, NGCP shall construct the connection assets and provide the necessary financing for such construction, in consideration of GNPower shall pay NGCP the related connection charges.

NGCP and GNPower earlier requested that it was imperative that the ERC approve the connection project because the power project will fully operate a power crisis that will adversely affect the Luzon grid in early to 2011.

"The connection assets are essential to the delivery of power from the generation facility to the Luzon grid. Thus, it is imperative that construction of the connection assets commence immediately so that the same may be ready to deliver the generation facility's power to the grid when the said facility commences commercial operations on the latter part of 2012," the two companies said.

According to the government's Power Supply and Demand Simulations for 2006-2014, power supply situation will become critical in Luzon beginning this year.

By 2011, the dependable capacity will no longer be sufficient to meet Luzon's expected capacity.

Luzon's additional capacity to be provided by GNPower's coal power plant will thus help avert the significant economic cost of prolonged brownouts, such as reduced investment, lost production and the loss of business confidence, they added.

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TIPID-SULIT TOGETHER!

TALK 'N TEXT SAY HELLO THE "TIPID-SULIT" WAY WITH TALK 'N TEXT BARANGAY PHONE

Who ever thought that you could make a call to a cellular phone even when you don't own one? Talk 'n Text makes that possible with its latest product innovation, the Barangay Phone, it is a common use phone that can be used to make voice calls at the lowest possible rate from any origin to any recipient around the country.

"From the day it opened for business, SMART has set out to put affordable and reliable mobile communications in the hands of every Filipino. The Talk 'N Text Barangay Phone not only helps us achieve this, it also allows our subscribers and retailers to benefit from the potential additional income it offers," says Dante Mejosa, SMART Wireless Consumer Division Head, the other Talk 'N Text product and service innovations that precede the Barangay Phone promises to benefit both retailers and consumers. "The new product is the result of a collaborative effort between Talk 'N Text – under leading wireless service provider Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART) – its sales team, and its retailers.

"While mobile phone users continue to grow in number over the years, our research shows that there are still Filipinos out there who have no access to communications. Surveys studies indicate that the communications needs at about 28% of Filipinos in the rural areas particularly, are currently not met either because they do not have the means to buy mobile devices or the first place, or they cannot maintain the service over time because they do not have the financial capacity to do so," explains Talk 'N Text Marketing Group Head, Perci Raquel. "Now, there are also those who have the means, and yet there will always be a time when communication links become impossible because either they have no landline, no load or their neighbours, or have a dead battery, with the Barangay Phone, they now have the most practical and most affordable means to communicate when all else is inaccessible."

Perci Raquel
Talk 'N Text Marketing Group Head

Dante Mejosa
SMART Wireless Consumer Division Head

Consider, for example, how the Barangay Phone can help the single mother in Pasay, Malabon, who needs to make an emergency call to her daughter in Manila working as a caregiver, to secure some money to hospitalize an ailing husband. Or a factory worker from Dipolog, Zamboanga, who runs out of load a few days before payday, but needs to make a short call to his parents to borrow some "pamasahi" (money). Or an office worker from Dubai, Quezon City who runs out of cellphone battery while waiting for a jeepney in a transport terminal, but needs to check on her sick son. In all these situations, the Barangay Phone comes in handy because of its accessibility, practicality and affordability.

What makes the Barangay Phone unique is that it is completely wireless, plus it allows users to make 3-minute calls to SMART and Talk 'N Text subscribers for only as low as ₱3 or equivalent to ₱1 per minute. All the user has to do is key consumable e-load from the retailer. The retailer then punches the amount on the Barangay Phone terminal, and the user is ready to make the call or even send texts. If the user is not able to consume the entire 3 minute's worth, he has the option to use the remaining value for additional calls or text messages depending on how much is left. Other load denominations, which can be used to call other cellphones and landlines, are ₱6 and ₱12.

The proposition is also advantageous to retailers. With a minimal initial investment on airtime when retailers can sell in "tingi" denominations of ₱3, ₱6, or ₱12, they already get the Barangay Phone for free. Another advantage is the minimal supervision needed because the terminal automatically runs off the call once the purchased load amount is consumed, thereby eliminating extended use and loss on the part of the retailer.

The Talk 'N Text Barangay Phone indeed promises to interconnect landlines and cellular phones at the most practical and affordable way possible. It ensures quality connection whether it be purely business or personal matters. Surely, there is no more reason why you can't communicate with anyone whether that person is using a landline or a cellphone, or whether you have a cellphone or not. From a simple "happy birthday" to a more urgent "relax, deadline na pa ng manuscript ko bukas", the Barangay Phone makes it all possible.

PARA MAKATAWAG, HANAPIN LANG ITO!

TALK 'N TEXT BARANGAY PHONE

BUSINESS Friday

TO SELL WELL

You need more than just good products

THE WATCH group has three categories—Luxury, Prestige and Fashion.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

WHEN A CUSTOMER HAS A PLETHORA of choices before him, he can certainly afford to be picky.

And business today customers feel that retail companies sell practically the same array of products, what eventually could separate them choose to distill out their previous calls in successful could cross another is excellent customer service.

Everybody wants to be given special treatment, after all.

"I'm being held behind a not less on the country's leading retail companies, which is why they take great pains to elevate the level of their customer service so that buyers will have another reason to go into their stores and, hopefully, part with their money.

Regular training

For Lucerne, one of the Philippines' largest distributors of luxury and prestige watches, customer service means training time and effort to train its people to meet the increasing appetite for information of an well-heeled customer as well as serious watch collectors.

"Monthly sales and brand information seminars are being organized by the individual brand principals to update on the yearly developments of each brand. Store managers and watch technicians are also sent to the brands' headquarters in Switzerland for advance training," says Emerson Wu, managing director of Lucerne that represents in the Philippines such revered watch brands as Patek Philippe, IWC and Omega.

"It is our goal to maintain an international level of standard in service and product information that other retailers offer abroad," Wu tells Business Friday in an interview. "That said, we have a huge advantage over other markets since Filipinos are known to be friendly and helpful."

That sense of service, Wu says, is only possible if the environment is conducive in keeping employees' morale high.

"In their way, happy employees make customers happy and this is repeatedly impressed in Lucerne's business that requires very close customer interaction.

Grouping

The Lucerne group is grouped into three categories. The Luxury group under the Lucerne brand represents the most expensive watches, such as Patek Philippe and Chopard. The Prestige unit called Chronos carries the more affordable Philip Stein, Hamilton, Ball and Carrera brands, among others, while the Fashion category through Timex tudes includes the big brands such as Nike, Emporio Armani, Fossil, DKNY and Diesel.

"Selling Luxury watches requires a lot of customer interaction, and we say people should be able to communicate effectively and adjust to the different personalities of our customers," Wu says.

"With the advent of Internet, most customers have easy access to a lot of information over the Web. So it is a huge effort for us to keep up with the flow of information and to provide the customers information in the product they are interested in," he adds.

Like Lucerne, the HRC group that caters mainly to the same market also relies customer service seriously.

Mystery shopper

According to Noel Cabacungan, HRC general manager, the company has strengthened its customer relationship programs through improving its in-store offers, investment in a Mystery Shopper program to easily monitor customer satisfaction and the training of its people, especially the frontliners.

"In the area of human resources, HRC has ensured that employees are given opportunities to maximize their full potential," Cabacungan says. "Besides other companies cutting on training costs, HRC has increased spending to 15 percent versus last year on training/investment."

Cabacungan cannot stress enough the importance of keeping employees happy, saying that happy employees will mean, "happy beautiful customers," which is HRC's mantra for this year.

"If an employee is happy, productivity follows and this equates quality customer service. At HRC, we exude positive experiences. Customers love us for we make them feel special in each visit. This feeling of exclusivity is the very reason why our customers keep coming back in our stores," he says.

Cabacungan shares that it has become more important than ever to raise

When to brand extend and when not to?

Q: WE'D LIKE TO DO A BRAND EXTENsion. As a successful local brand, we've beaten our multinational competitor brand some three years back. So we hope you'll understand if we don't reveal our brand name. We've attended your Ad Hero conference series and recall that Al Ries cautioned against brand extending. He said it's not good because the brand will lose focus. But we also recall your own Marketing Rx column once challenged this advice by citing successful brand extensions.

Unfortunately, you just cited counter examples without clearly explaining how those exceptions succeeded. It's the explanation that would be more useful to us. We'll not fail to gobble up its complete to brand extend. And that's our question now. When is it inappropriate to brand extend and when is it alright?

A: We drew our answer and explanation from the "marketing concept." The marketing concept admonishes us that in any of our marketing decisions, we should start not from where we are as marketers but instead from where consumers are, particularly from where our target consumers are, to regards your brand extension question, abiding by this concept means brand extending according to how your target consumers favor or does not favor the brand extension. As you have to first learn this consumers' response.

How do your target consumers respond to your brand extension? David Aaker, the inventor of "brand equity" has extensively researched this issue. In his 1991 book, "Managing Brand Equity," Aaker said that consumers favorably or unfavorably respond to brand extension depending on how they feel the brand extension is promising or that lacking a "fit" with the parent brand's core "differentiator" or "its key association" in the consumers' minds.

To explain and illustrate, let's take two cases in point.

Coke Zero

The first is the case of a brand extension's fit with the parent brand's core differentiator. This is the case of Coke as the parent brand. The brand extension to Coke Zero in differentiating itself from Coke. Coke Zero owes sugar content as the basis for its differentiator but expected and maintained the Coca-Cola taste, the parent brand's core differentiator. So consumers found Coke Zero to have a good fit with Coke. They were the same on taste. Here's your brand extension prescription for this kind of case: If you have to brand extend, make sure that your brand extension maintains in it the parent brand's core differentiator and as such its core differentiator in some other product attributes.

Johnson's Baby products

The second case relates to a brand extension's fit with the parent brand's key association in the consumers' mind. This is the interesting and initially simple case of Johnson Baby products. As to recall one, it was not simple at all but complex. For years, since the '70s, the Johnson Baby brand was totally extended from baby powder to baby oil, baby lotion, baby shampoo and baby soap. Then in the '80s, J&J thought of extending the brand to another baby product category centering on nutrition to include cereal formula and follow-on formula. The participants in the follow-on formula was particularly attractive because it was the creation of that category, which suddenly and out of nowhere, made Wyeth the No. 1 pharma company then. This was in spite of (or maybe because of) the WHO and government restrictions on the promotion and marketing of starter formula brands.

On first sight, J&J thought that brand extension to a Johnson Starter Formula and a Johnson Follow-on Formula had a natural fit with the Johnson parent brand. After all, the proposed brand extension was still talking about the key association to the baby market segment. However, market research on mothers indicated that the relevant key association isn't the baby segment was, nor that simple and direct. Moms said in the research that while it was true that they associated the Johnson brand with what their babies need, they pointed out that the brand was for products used on their babies.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

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Interest Payment	Quarterly
Taxation	Presently withholding tax
Tax Incentive	The Republic, subject to an investment ceiling, shall assume and pay for the tax on interest income of Retail Target Investors who are Overseas Filipino Workers, migrant Filipinos who reacquired or retained Philippine citizenship, legitimate spouse, parents, and children/heirs of OFW and migrant Filipino, and official stores of OFW
Offer Period	April 21-27, 2010
Issue Date	April 29, 2010

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Using nostalgia as a marketing tool

NOSTALGIA MARKETING LETS consumers reminisce about a brand how they grew up with it and the emotions made in relationship with that particular brand. That's exactly what Shakey's did. Its latest thematic TVC takes a trip down memory lane to go hand in hand with its 35th year anniversary.

Shakey's is a brand that has very strong emotional and functional values that haven't changed from its inception. By means of this, a nostalgic TV commercial was deemed the best way to bring back and remember latest wants and fuzzy sentiments for the brand and, in turn, reaffirm brand loyalty.

Campaign aims to highlight firm's 35th year

History of nostalgia

Just a little over a year ago, Shakey's introduced the "Making Memories" campaign. Taking a nostalgically sentimental look at unforgettable moments with friends and family in Shakey's, garnered very effective for the brand.

It has been proven that as years go by people's yearnings for wonderful feelings had when happy events in the past are recalled, grows. It makes them more receptive to advertisements and marketers' use of what researchers call "is longing for positive memories from the past." Today, a nostalgic approach might just help people see a clearer vision of what is and what is not possible.

The Shakey's research team also found out that guests almost always reminisce about their experiences at the restaurant and constantly talked about the emergence of One-Ala'dinner.

Armed with this information, the brand set out on finding the best way to create a campaign that would best highlights its 35th year in the business.

Born of memories

Marketing manager Ruelle Camupa shares: "Shakey's has one of the longest legacies in the food industry today. With the brand enjoying a lot good memories that you definitely have to share. It would not be fair to our guests if we didn't let them know that the Shakey's they've loved is still here and much better."

There was an ether course to take for come up with a campaign for nostalgia. The hope is that warm, fuzzy feelings about the past will help make people feel better about the present and future.

The TV commercial was a creative collaboration of the premiere Shakey's Team led by EPIFANIO Vic Emperio, marketing manager Ruelle Camupa, product manager Joy de Villa and the creative team from Brainstorm Associates.

With only the base in mind, Shakey's customized the services of top stylists Patrick and Nicole Quebrar, who also claimed director Raul Dee to capture the warm and fuzzy nostalgia of Shakey's.

Behind the scenes

Despite what's now the TVC might think it was an easy project but the shoot took two days and nights, what with perfectionist director Dee at the helm. He would see something a bit too vibrant an area else would, like a toaster's hand that remotely pulled someone's slice or a door that was half-ajar where it should have been fully opened—minor things which one wouldn't notice but he would.

No one will contest the fact that the 60 talents and some of the guest difficult to direct. Director Dee's handling of the children was simply amazing; but then people, including our veterans in the production, said: "Uso them Shakey's pizza and you'll be more than delighted." Sure enough, the script called for them to eat a pizza and then allow the shoot with the children were smoothly.

The TVC presents a concept that, although not entirely new, deserves to be given a second look and is worth remembering—how friendships grow and remain through the years with Shakey's. It was crucial to show that the TVC had something to say about the present day as it is about Shakey's past. It gives the message that the brand is just as important to families and friends now as it has always been.

The sounds, smells, and other aspects of Shakey's all-familiar to the service of those moments that make up the body wintry of mind. There is a shared past.

Shakey's is growing and has more than 110 restaurants to key cities nationwide including Metro Manila, its regional spots in Baguio, Tagaytay, Batangas, Laguna, Cebu and Davao.

Shakey's celebrates 35 years and is home of the original brick oven baked thin crust pizza. Visit the biggest Shakey's restaurant in the world along Quezon Avenue. For delivery, please call 77 777 and remember, if it's hot, it's FREE!

Afghan investors see great white hope in marble sector

GXC GALES and Business Development manager Tina Moran (left) and the GXC team immerse in Environmental Awareness Activity at the La Mesa Watershed as part of company's core philosophy.

Local cosmetics firm invests in Nature

INVESTING IN NATURE MAKES GOOD business sense to one of the country's leading personal care and cosmetics trading firms gearing up to launch its newest brand of products based on the concept of natural and organic ingredients.

Global Xchange Corporation (GXC), one of the leading players in the local cosmetics trading industries and down the limited investment for its eco-awareness philosophy by signing an agreement with Barangay Estimain to sponsor one hectare of the La Mesa Dam basin reserve.

"GXC believes that responsibility for caring for the environment transcends traditional efforts and that the private sector, especially businesses, must also invest on measures to protect our natural resources for future generations," notes GXC Sales and Business Development manager Tina Moran.

Moran also reveals that the partnership with Barangay Bahhanan was very timely since GXC will soon unveil its newest product line developed around the concept of natural and organic ingredients.

"Western cosmetics and personal care companies have already shown the way — going natural and organic in the formulation of its products," explains Moran. "Now it's our turn to help establish locally a greater awareness on the greater wellness benefits of natural and organic ingredients when it comes to beauty products," she adds.

Moran shares that GXC, in cooperation with SA Golden, one of the major cosmetics manufacturing firms in the country has also invested in a research and development facility to develop locally its own product formulations using local and imported natural and organic ingredients.

Among its more important ingredient included in its soon to be launched brand of products are coconut trees products in the locally "Indio" oil which is derived from the Peruvian Amazon Plant.

Also certified as organic by Ecocert, one of Europe's recognized authority in naturally and organically derived cosmetic ingredients, and via rigorous chromatography analysis, the product is found to be among the richest sources of Omega 3 and 6Fs (essential fatty acids) that is highly beneficial for skin wellness.

GXC's philosophy on "investing in sunrise", however, does not end with its product formulations but also by introducing innovative to help achieve a balanced environmental triple. The new product lines will feature packaging that is bio-degradable and recyclable.

"With our company's philosophy we hope to inspire other companies with the idea that industries can still produce high-quality products but still conserve now that our environment is protected," states Moran.

Moran reveals that the new and exciting "natural" line of personal care products will soon be unveiled to the public around June 2018 and soon be available exclusively in Watsons's outlets all over the country.

You need more than just ...

From page B1 »

customer service to a new level because, simply, customers will not settle for less and growing rates value for their money has become an economic concern.

Wise spenders

"Today's customers are considered wise spenders, they make sure that they get their money's worth and spend on things that they need. This is very fitting for GBC as our value for money products not only spell affordability but quality as well," he says.

While the GXC group invested in rain's training, Terry S.A., managing director Antonio Gonzales, it started working with a team of experts in customer relationship marketing in 2008.

"This enabled us to manage our database of customers and profile them. This allows us to really understand things like who they are, what they want and expect from us," Gonzales says. "Through this, we are able to better communicate with our customers, develop products and even train our staff them and offer products that are right for their lifestyle."

Then last year, Terry S.A. established its own customer service department to handle all customer calls. It also regularly trains its sales force on customer care and has a person who is responsible for social networking sites.

"This is a platform for us to finding with our customers in their own environment in a personal, open, and candid way," Gonzales says. "Caring for our customers is something that is continuous and we need to adapt and evolve accordingly."

Gonzales says Terry S.A. knows well that it cannot afford to let up on its efforts to provide customers with service they deserve because customers have become better informed.

This, they know exactly what they want from the stores they patronize.

"It is not that the customers are simply more demanding, but that they are better informed. The Internet has made it possible for customers to better educate themselves about a product or service," Gonzales says.

"Customers now more than ever know what they want and they know the service they deserve and brands have to live up to it," she says. "Customer have a profound influence on a brand and brands should embrace this."

Marketing Rx ...

From page B1 »

externally, namely on their skin but not taken internally.

Its while we are also in a hurry to point you to your second Rx, we now do so with caution. Extension about brand associations in the consumer's mind is different and riskier than extension using readily available physical or functional product features as in the Coke Zero case. Brand extension can arise what the Kellogg School Marketing professor Bryant Stockford refined in his Consumer Information Processing books as "confusion" product attributes.

They are attributes that need "reinforcing" to gain consumer credibility. You need to research your target consumers to uncover those confusing elements. So your second Rx may be stated as to the first one but with the preceding qualifier.

Finally, what do you do when you find no Rx? First, do not brand extend. Instead, search for another and more suitable branding.

Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at Marketingrx@philstar.net or DrNewMarketing@gmail.com. God bless!

An 'Egg-citing' business

From page B1 »

to before. We get more clients and our assets grow tremendously. Now we have delivery vans plus a pet motor vehicle for my son," Elaine beams.

Since signing up with SME.com.ph, Goldeen was able to propel itself to become one of the major egg distributors in the country today. "Our yearly sales volume were sky high and orders just kept on coming," she points out.

Through the company's support, Elaine went to Pampanga to apply for a loan to finance Goldeen's business expansion. She learned of Planterbank's easy experience in "handholding" the SMEs towards growth. "Partnering with Planters Bank was a big help because they were able to help me expand my business," she stresses.

Now that her business has grown phenomenally, Elaine recalls the struggles of Goldeen. "In my early years of business there were hardships, trials, sorrows but we were able to surpass all that. We are proud of our achievements and what our business has reached so far," she says.

She considers ability, talent, perseverance and hard work as key factors behind the success of Goldeen. She says the competition also helped a lot because it gives them the drive to work harder and be more critical of the quality of eggs they are supplying. Self-according to Elaine, equally important are her people who have been her partner in managing the business.

Despite her success, Elaine is not complacent with her laurels. She has just ventured into the construction business, "on a small scale", according to her. She also plans to go into farming soon. At the end of the day, she has proven that it only takes the right amount of knowledge and perseverance, and more importantly, a reliable partner, for an SME to prosper. Be for your next egg delivery, no matter how big or small, just call 733-3700 or 714-8879. You can also visit their website at www.goldeenegg.com.com.

An 'Egg-citing' business

ELAINE Louie, owner of Goldnest Inc.

EGGS, THEY ARE, ARE ONE of the best sources of protein.

Its nutritional profile as a near-pure dietary "food" according to Dr. Elizabeth Applegate of the department of nutrition of the University of California at Davis "have made eggs the cornerstone of nutrition among us its high quality to promote and enhance vital amounts of many essential vitamins and minerals."

Realizing the potential of the egg done the best business, Elaine Louie, an accounting graduate, one decided to put up Goldnest Inc. in 1997. Formerly known as C.E.L.L. Enterprises, the company opened its main office along E.R. Hidalgo St. in Quiapo Manila with an initial capital of only P50,000.

"I decided to venture into the egg distribution business because it seemed like a good business—very profitable and easy for me to familiarize with," says Elaine. But just like all other businesses, Elaine also had her own share of tough times in starting Goldnest.

Concerns

For instance, there was the day-to-day concerns of delivering orders on time for all store owners in different areas around Metro Manila. Without a delivery van, it was hard for Elaine to commute via public transportation while carrying all the trays of eggs. She also had to reckon with her more established competitors in the business, many of whom were getting a bigger share of the market owing to their ability to deliver orders on time.

Her also experienced the problem of buyers not paying for their orders, which definitely created problems in the company's cash flow. Goldnest could not get a bigger credit line as well from suppliers since the company was then considered "a new kid on the block" in the egg distribution business.

At that time, advertising on television, radio, and newspapers was definitely out of the equation. Elaine had very limited resources and had no budget to allot for advertising. Goldnest, for this did not stop Elaine, formed with clever determination to succeed and in greater her boundaries. Elaine took on the challenge of marketing the company without necessarily draining the company's limited resources.

Elaine remained optimistic that there were solutions to these problems and it was just a matter of time to find them. She believed the "holy grail" to her marketing woes when a friend invited her to attend a seminar conducted by SME.com.ph, an internet company that offers Filipino small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with customized web design, e-commerce, web and e-mail hosting, and online programming.

Joint venture

A joint venture company between the Planetwideph, the country's lead bank for SMEs and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), SME.com.ph provides SMEs with affordable IT-based business solutions to help them market their business not just locally but even globally through the world wide web.

While attending the seminar, Elaine realized that linking up to the Internet is the answer to her problems as it offered huge potentials to expand her fledgling business.

She signed up with SME.com.ph for their web hosting services and voilà! ... Goldnest immediately received an inquiry from a major hotel within Metro Manila requesting her to supply their daily requirement of eggs.

Since then, Goldnest was on a roll, getting three star hotels, five star hotels, and even restaurants, fast foods and supermarkets as their clients.

Growth

"Definitely, there was a big difference in the way we do business today as compared

ARA DS-3

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Presented by: The NESTEP Bundle, Inc.
Contact Person: Ms. Edwin Mendoza
Mr. Edwin Mendoza

People, Events & Products

Ayala Triangle Gardens hosts kids' sports fest

WHO SAYS YOU CAN'T ENJOY summer to the city?

If you think leisurely summers can only be spent out of town or in the suburbs, one only needs to explore the green heart of Makati Central Business District (MCBD) to discover that there's more to the district than meets the eye.

In November 2009, Ayala Land Inc. opened the Ayala Triangle Gardens, the green spread bounded by Ayala Avenue, Paseo de Roxas and Makati Avenue. This summer, the Gardens are providing metropolitan families an opportunity to enjoy urban living with the introduction of the Summer Fest, a series of weekend activities that kicked off with the Easter Surprise April 4. The events are geared towards making the residential communities of the CBD enjoy the summer even in their own backyard.

The Kid's Sports Fest will test children's physical grit and endurance as they make a dash for the 100m run, traverse the obstacle course, manage a route at the trampoline, shoot hoops, ride a unicycle or maybe even challenge a 250 pound muscle man in arm wrestling. Philvolleyball's will be available from food stalls which have set shop for the occasion at the Summer Fest: Jamie's, Gilberti and La Carpeta.

"There is a definitive shift in today's urban lifestyle where we are a more well-rounded and holistic approach to city living. Makati may be the most city's premier financial district, but it's also a place where recreational pursuits can perfectly complement the pace of your urban lifestyle."

Kids Sports Fest at the Ayala Triangle Gardens is scheduled on Sunday April 25 from 6 to 9 a.m. The first 250 kids ages 3 to 10 years old to e-mail their full name and age to ayalatriangleland.com.ph will be provided wristlets and T-shirts and get to qualify as winners. Call Marie Serrano at 841-5312 for details.

Dolby Super Digital Cinemas offer the ultimate movie experience

TODAY'S MOVIE FANS HAVE HIGHER expectations and demand more from entertainment providers. With the advent of 3D films like "Avatar," "How to Train Your Dragon," "Alice in Wonderland," "Clash of the Titans," and many more, watching the latest digitally enhanced blockbusters has never been more exciting!

Gateway Complex 10, with its Dolby Super Digital Cinemas and state-of-the-art 3D glasses, promises ultimate viewing pleasure for movie aficionados. Enjoy crisp, clear, larger-than-life images in 4K on opening night or weeks after its initial run. Plus, movie fans are assured of the highest hygienic standards in the lightweight, comfortable, and sensuous-

ly-soft 3D glasses that they will wear in Gateway Complex with its customized machine and special cleaning solutions to ensure that the 3D glasses are always germ, bacteria, dust, and smudge-free, and ready to bring pleasure to life in amazing color and clarity for the next user.

Experience 3D entertainment with crystal clear sounds and images that jump right off the screen! So scratches, no fading, no pops, and no jitters.

Consistently delivering unparalleled viewing pleasure, the Dolby Super Digital Cinema is the next big thing at Gateway Complex 10, which continues to rank among the top 5 cinemas in the metro due to the world-class quality entertainment it provides.

Aside from state-of-the-art amenities such as full stadium seating for unobstructed views of the screen and Sound accentuated walls for larger than-life sounds, cinemas at Gateway Complex 10 are also equipped with Dolby Digital EX (this format for surround sound experience, and the largest curved screen in the country at 70 feet wide and 30 feet high. Reservations are also made easier and more efficient with its Movie Companion Ticketing System.

The top choice for the screening of the biggest blockbusters and exclusive runs, Gateway Complex 10 remains the preferred entertainment venue of every movie aficionado. For more info on the latest and biggest flicks at Gateway Complex 10, for updated screening schedules and reservations, visit www.gatewaycineplex10.com.ph.

Discover the road to fame at Festival Mall

HONE YOUR ACTING AND MODeling skills this summer with a series of workshops offered by "Road to Fame: the Philippine Fashion and Model Congress" at Festival Supermall in Filinvest, Alabang.

Get the best advice and training from industry professionals on topics such as labels, body measurements and tags (April 24), character (May 1) and final VTR, casting, and evaluation (May 8). Conducted by Chase Productions, the workshop series runs every Saturday from 3 p.m. onwards at the Mind Trek Cafe.

The Road to Fame workshop series is open to the first 50 registrants, on a first come, first served basis. A minimum purchase of P500 from any regular festival Supermall store or outlet entitles the customer to any enrollment with the My Fame and Fortune enrollment pin. Present the tags or official receipts to reception to receive to redeem the enrollment, which must be presented upon admission to the sessions and workshop venue.

The certificate can also be used for the Road to Fame casting event, although their participation is subject to entrance to the workshop area. A second certificate must be redeemed to attend both the casting event and the workshops.

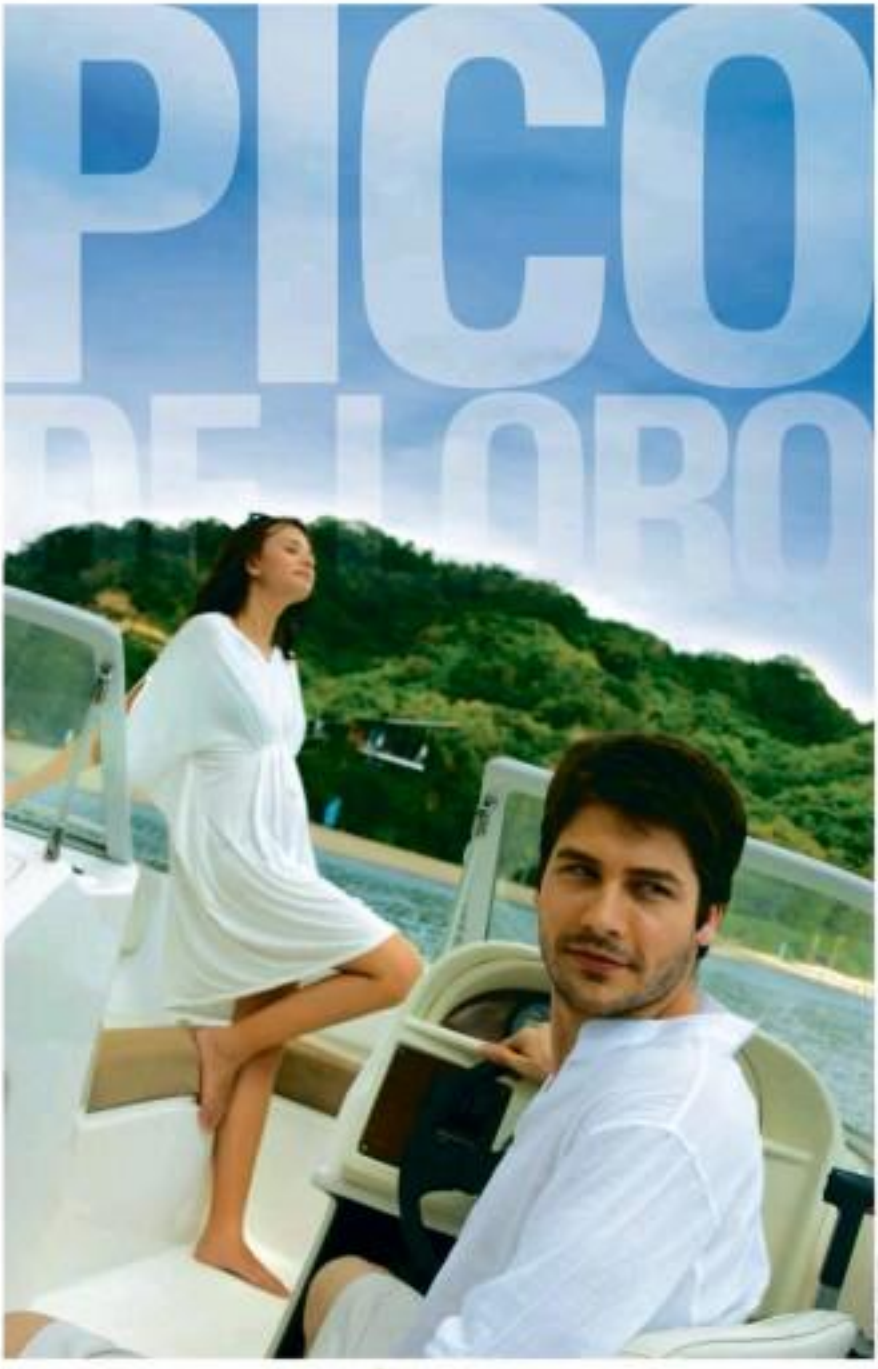
Festival Supermall has over 60 apparel outlets and boutiques for children, men, women, and even plus sizes. It is also the only mall with more than 30 food outlets: Dragonfly Superstore, 309 Bestsellers, Bakuten Department Store, Ace Hardware and Handyman. Likewise, it has over 600 specialty stores, boutiques and kiosks, a total of 2,300 traditional parking slots, various entertainment and 18 state-of-the-art cinemas.

Leisure on the move at Landco's summer fest

LANDCO PACIFIC CORP BIDS YOU A exciting summer fiesta off this 29 to 30 at Landco's leisure community lifestyle Fiesta to gears up for a friendly sports fest. Get ready to swing and flex your lines in a fishing event on April 24. Hacienda Socorro in Tarlac, Socorro, integrates the leisure culture in every aspect of living. This 615-hectare retreat community with fully equipped resort amenities and modern residential estates. A shopping, and several town amenities, leisure facilities, Hacienda Socorro is situated 1.5 hours from Alabang and spans three municipalities in Laguna and Socorro. The property is graced with panoramic views of Mt. Banahaw, Mt. San Cristobal and Mt. Makiling, and the vibrancy of rivers, Bulakin and Labasin. With its diversion to rich cultural heritage, Hacienda Socorro is set to become the country's premier leisure destination, an icon of Philippine tourism, and a distinct embodiment of Filipino living. For more details, call Atlanta Fritz at (0920) 8611110 and 856-5182.

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Runners in the 14km category of the Marriott Adventure Run hold tight April 11 got their feet wet in one of the few river crossings throughout the adventure run set with the scenery. Organized by Marriott Fun Runners Endeavor, the Marriott Adventure Run was co-presented by Philam and was sponsored by 100 Plus, SMAC Plus, Summit Natural Water, and media partners PremierSports, Businessworld, Active and Fitness, Multisport, Gadgets, Men's Health, and Cebuan Sinulat Magazine.



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Today's 'it' underwear for women, and soon–men

MEET's Olivo, international business development director of Spanx, explains the anatomy of the men's compression underskin that claims to polish the beer gut and create a silhouette of firm pecs. It will be available here in August.

By Cecilia V. Perez

SPANX HAS BEEN MOCKED AS the have-to-try women's shortcut. Critics say there's just no graceful way of squeezing yourself out of those tight, stretchy little wispy bikinis when you're in the heat of the moment—the same tight, stretchy little wispy bikinis that possibly got you in that state.

"But that hasn't stopped women from wanting them!" said an amused Missy Elliott at the formal launch of Spanx in the Philippines last week, in a private, boudoir-setting show in the presidential suite of Peninsula Manila.

Elliott is the spokesperson and director of international business development of Spanx, the Atlanta-based company that makes the revolutionary shape wear everyone is talking about.

"It may be a challenge," she acknowledged. "I've heard funny stories of women making a pit stop in the restroom if they think they may get romantic. But women are very smart. They figure out a way and that hasn't stopped them from wearing it."

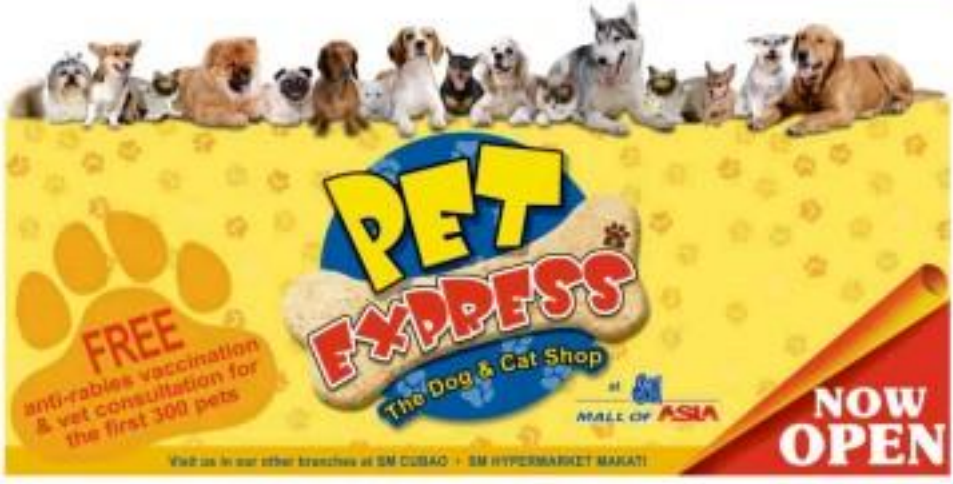
Considering Spanx's success in the US and now extending its reach globally, she made her point.

In the Philippines, it was introduced in December by Bayani's at its Makati, Shangri-La and Alabang stores. It's now in 15 outlets.

In August, even guys can wear this no-beer-belly undergarment

In Hollywood, Spanx is a household name, mentioned by A-list celebrities on the red carpet in the same breath as the names of the most prestigious fashion designers. Apparently, red-carpet couture can only look flawless if Spanx is worn underneath it. No one dares

TODAY'S 12



Today's 'it' underwear for women, and soon—men

way in front of the paparazzi without their Spanx on.

Footless pantyhose

Spanx was born out of its founder's desire for a smoother silhouette so her hosiness like cut off the feet of her pantyhose, creating the first footless pantyhose in 1998. With $5,000 in capital, the young woman, Sara Blakely, founded what the world now knows as Spanx shape wear. She has since expanded the product range to provide a quick fix to women's physical insecurities, and has grown her one-woman brain to an 80-strong team.

"Sara has very high standards. She believes in problem-solving. If [the product] isn't perfect, we don't release it," Elliott noted. "We're a company of women, so a lot of love goes into the products. We take it to heart. Others just copy what we're doing."

Bra-delights, its much-loved bestsellers range using Invisery fabric, took five years of development.

Before Spanx, she added, product testing was done on mannequins "that don't have the ability to say 'Ouch!' But we don't do that. We have a panel of testers...some of them declared Spanx users who have exacting standards. Even women who are size small have different body shapes."

SPANX is basically mandated for the Philippines at the Peninsula Manila with spokesperson Micky Ellott.

Elliott has been with the company since 2003 and has witnessed how it has grown into the powerhouse it is today. "We prefer listening to women than to Wall Street," she said of customers from Singapore to Moscow to Australia, who are requesting Spanx.

There's a thoughtfulness to the way a Spanx is made. For most of the high-waist styles, the crotch is designed with a double gusset, making it more convenient to visit the bathroom (if you're a little awkward, for sure, and requires getting used to, but it definitely eases worries about getting it from underneath).

The bottoms are all designed so he wears no panties—no need to wear another pair under them.

Elliott also underscores their use of lightweight fabrics with seamless-styling properties, making them comfortable to wear even in the tropics—every day.

Men's edition

At the Spanx event, Elliott previewed men's solution to their sticking bow pals: compressing underskirt that claims to flatten stomach, lifts and firms the look of the chest, and even supports the look and improves posture. This will be available here in August, along with the rest of the women's line.

In the US, the company also recently introduced its body-shaping swimwear.

Elliott-for-Boss rates (especially some is used to 1000). "Some women want to look smaller and they tend to get a size smaller," Elliott noted. "That can cause problems like bulges and rolling. Spanx is true to size. You'll find no exact size for you."

In the Philippines, the Bataan-style watcher fans have been quite successful, she said, due to its all-rounder, the Power Panties mid-thigh and Power high-waist shaper...two of Oprah Winfrey's favorite things...are way tallest here.

Back-to-basics chic

MICHAEL KORS HANDBAG AND FOOTWEAR collections for Spring 2010 exude a fresh, light, back-to-basics vibe with stylish nuts-and designs.

The neutral colors match with the polished and structured designs of the 1960s fashion revolution. The quintessential handbag has been made over. There are graphic shapes in earth-toned skins in the Python shoulder bag or the ID chain hobo, and in classics such as the curbed Gansevoort satchel and the Bria shoulder tote.

The covered Sadder wedge and the Michael Kors glam jelly for our heels perfect for a late afternoon stroll in the park. For a more sophisticated look, the Gansevoort platforms are a perfect pair.

Michael Kors is exclusively distributed by Stores Specialists Inc. and is located at Greenbelt 5, Ayala's Makati. The Forum Plant Mall and Shangri-La Plaza Mall.

LARGE ID chain hobo

MYRIA wedge (shoes) and Gansevoort platform shoes (below)

PLATE jelly flat

LARGE ID chain hobo

ITEM tote and bumper espadrilles

LARGE Lilly totes

ROBIN Tomas in front of the Philippine Center's window on 5th Avenue, NYC

Robin Tomas design graces 5th Avenue, NYC

A SPECIAL DESIGNED BY NEW York-based Filipino fashion designer Robin Tomas currently graces the windows of the Philippine Center along famed 5th Avenue in Manhattan. The creation is a fully hand-beaded bodice in ivory and shimmer satin ball skirt, was the finale piece of his Kapitoe pressure collection showcased in Manila in 2009.

To mark the event, a cocktail reception was held April 16 at the center's gallery hall, where several other pieces from his collection were put on display inside the Center's main gallery overlooking 5th Avenue. Guests came from the New York fashion industry, New York press, the Filipino community and Philippine press.

Tomas is a graduate of Parsons School of Design and is trained for Anna Sui and Valentino in New York. He has also received numerous awards in US retail brands such as Gap, Tommy Hilfiger and J. Crew.

In 2009, Tomas launched his first solo collection of evening wear in Philippine Fashion Week. He recently won the 15-minute Silhouette Trifari collection of Sapitos Design Competition in New York. His winning design will be sold later this year at Bloomingdale's.

Tomas is the second Filipino designer to be featured in the "Best of the Philippines on Fifth Avenue" project of the Philippine Commerce Consular New York, which features Filipino artists and artisans who have received global acclaim for the excellence of their craft. In May, designs by Filipino shoe designers Brian Tesorio and Inni Jorge will take over the Philippine Center window.

Tomas' work will be on display throughout April.

Visit www.robintomas.com.

A PASSERBY checks out Tomas' window display.

Red-hot weekend sale

ALABANG TOWN CENTER (ATC) HOLDING A weekend sale on April 23-25, with over 130 participating merchants from homegrown fashion brands to quality lifestyle items to the love in dining.

Shoppers who meet the red requirement for the day with P1,000 worth of receipts, are entitled to exciting perks from the sale.

All the shopping excitement's going to get one parched, as Coca-Cola is giving shoppers a free Coke refill for every P150 worth of receipts and purchase of a Coke regular product from Food Choices at the Town.

HSBC is also giving shoppers some love. Cardholders will enjoy zero-percent interest on their "Enter the Town Red" buys. At Starbucks, a minimum single-receipt purchase of P2,000 on an HSBC credit card can entitle shopper to any tall beverage of your choice plus one add-on.

Shoppers also get one raffle coupon for every P600 worth of receipts from ATC shops (excluding Telecom Latin).

Up for grabs in a trip for two to Boracay with round trip land and sea transfers via Kalibo, and a three-day-two-night stay with daily buffet breakfasts, at the hotel's one Shangri-La Boracay. And luggage pieces from Travel Club.

"TOUR Taiwan 100" will be on April 24-25 at SM Mall of Asia Atrium Lobby.

Taiwan travel expo set

INSPIRED BY THE MAGNIFICENT EMERGING and design of the Taipei 101, the Taiwan Tourism Bureau brings to the Philippines, for the first time, its annual travel expo entitled Asia. Dubbed "Tour Taiwan 100," the two-day event is set on April 24 and 25 at the SM Mall of Asia Atrium Lobby.

Taiwan's Tourism Bureau is drumbeating this travel exposition as they want its classy neighbor country to enjoy its culture and shopping delights, of which Pinoys are known for. Traveling to Taiwan has never been easier this time as there is no visa requirement for visiting tourists. Plus, the low USD dollar to Philippine peso conversion rate makes things much more convenient.

Live entertainment from Taiwan's famed dance troupes will be there to for the weekend event.

Four lucky persons of the travel expo will each win a free round-trip ticket from the participating airlines.

Call the Taiwan Visitors Association at (+8632) 551-3670/6789; fax (+8632) 551-3671/5559; visit www.welcometaiwan.net; or drop by Suite 23-01, 23th Level, Wiseta Gold, hill no.67 Jalan Raja Culan in downtown Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

SEXY mini dress.

Summer finds at Greenhills

THE NEWLY refurbished Shoppesville at Greenhills Shopping Center offers a wide selection of must-haves for the beach.

These include shades in various styles and colors to complement any summer outfit, colorful iconic symbol bikini tops, sheer sarongs and sheer dresses, all manner of accessories (anklet and bangles, neckpiece and earrings), and summer bags in transparent, waterproof materials to hold all your summer essentials.

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Greenbelt's peerless style

On the runway, now: The most diverse and most impressive collection of homegrown and global fashion brands

IF you get the exclusive preview, it's only fair that you get the first dibs, too, right?

That, positively, will be the case tomorrow, April 24, when Ayala Malls' Greenbelt Mall previews to loyal shoppers the Spring-Summer 2013 collections of the country's most pool of world-class labels in Greenbelt 5's Filipino Zone, alongside a big sale from the same designers and other participating mall tenants.

This is the curtain-raiser for a series of summer fashion shows and events, featuring the mall's long and prestigious roster of homegrown and global brands that make up the inimitable Greenbelt style.

At 7 p.m. tomorrow in Greenbelt 5 Fashion Walk, "Designs Filipino" will trail the spotlight on Filipino Zone merchants like Abaniel, Ariel Rapa, Atelier Avalar, Barbs, Bayo, Bria Rambo of Filipiniana, Benny Bouche's Mom Calica, Erni Jorge and Elena Bautista, Gaupo, Jesselmen, Jun Escario, Kashieca, Kate Tortatlo, L Manila, Rajjpinas, and Myth designers Bo Rondo Ortiz, Joey Samson, Joel Escober and Chris Dao.

The same participating merchants will hold an exclusive sale from 7-10 p.m., affording shoppers first dibs at the new collections, and up to 70-percent discount on select items.

Greenbelt 3—home to Topshop, Topman, Uniqlo, Lacoste, Kate Spade, Diesel, Brian Anglisano, Shangrawoman, Boss, Okab, SpringfieldL, KOKO, as well as local specialty shops Filma, Madison, Cartesian and Tim—will also unveil tomorrow its fashion exhibit of the brands' respective new collections, it will run until May 2.

On Sunday, April 28, families with youngsters and tweens will be treated to a day of exciting activities, beginning with a kiddie fashion show at 5 p.m., featuring the collections of the brands Anya, BigMOmail, Dash, Gingersnaps, Spin, Doh Kloh, Table Talk, Youp! & Me, Kids of Boys and Hobbes and Landes.

There will also be a runway act for tweens and teens from Bratpack, Orange Juice, Collezione, Pinoy Lab Kids and Fox, plus Mother Care and Kevin & Baby for mommies. That's not all, not to be missed are the day's other fun stuff: fashion photography and makeover sessions, and more surprises and giveaways.

The mall's food tenants will keep everyone fed and sated as there will be sale set up by Fish & Co., La Maison, Caprichosa, Hotbreat Sports Grill, Kopi Roti, Fusion, Martha's Cake and White Hat.

On Monday, April 29, the Fashion Walk will host the prestige brands of Greenbelt 4's runway show, so expect to see not only of the season collections of Bodega Vessini, Bulgari, Burberry, Chantal, Gucci, Hugo Boss, Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs, Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo and the selection at Designer 138, but also sightings of Manila's elite and wannabes.

No other mall in the metro could possibly claim to have the most diverse and most impressive collection of homegrown and international fashion brands under one roof. Talk style and, indeed, Greenbelt is peerless.

SEE A VIVID VIEW OF FASHION AT GREENBELT STYLE

UNVEILING THE MOST AWAITED FASHION TRENDS IN LIVING COLOR.

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APRIL 24 FASHION WALK

SUMMER COLLECTION BY KIDS AND TEENS STORES GREENBELT 5
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All four captivate

In INQUIRER Lifestyle and Samsung's 'Face Off,' Diaz, Samson, Aseron and Cordero defend her/his own fashion identity—superbly

By Alice Y Vergara

NOT A FEW GUESTS ON Monday night's "Face Off" came expecting to see a typical fashion show featuring four designers. Were they wrong.

Before the last glove became part of people's collective memory, they became a rare witness to four shows rolled into one, as featured talents Patricia Santos-Ilon, Ivan Isaiah Aseron, Joey Samson and guest designer Auggie Cordero presented totally different collections with distinct looks and identity.

And unlike certain shows where two divas or so designers will have to fire passion each share the ramp, Cordero and company never able to convey them full stories to relish but compelling manner.

The evening also marked the launch of Samsung's full HD 3D LED TV, the first 3D TV to be rolled out in Asia and Oceania. (See related story on D3.)

At the main time "Face Off," like last year's debut edition, which was also produced by Inquirer Lifestyle and Samsung, gave people a rare chance to compare and contrast each designer's work up close and personal.

Except for Cordero, who showed 24 pieces that underscored his mastery of tailored couture, including seemingly effortless draping, lacing and judicious beadwork, the others showed anywhere between 20 and 22 pieces—enough to allow each designer to flesh out his/her respective views without being reckless. Each designer did superb editing of his collection.

Indeed, one of the show's strengths, apart from the variety it offered, was the attention each designer placed on editing—one of the first casualties in many a solo show requiring the hapless designer to unwittingly produce 60 or so supposedly interesting pieces based on flimsy inspirations, inadequate materials and overambition.

There was little room for such carrying and commitment found aplenty in "Face Off," held at the Marriott Manila's ballroom in Newport City, Pasay. The number of clothes each designer presented left no room for unnecessary outfits, but definitely wanting for more, which is reason was the idea.

INQUIRER Lifestyle salonistas Tessa Prieto-Valdes hosts the evening event.

INQUIRER Creative with Pharrell Wanda Diaz Richard Seal, business editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc and Samsung marketing director Bonjie Jimenez

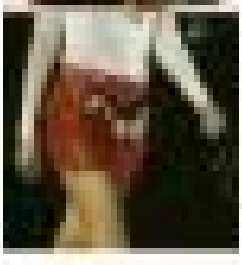
Diaz

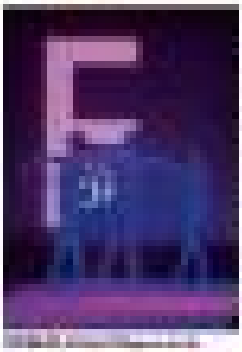
Not a few fashion observers, including this reporter, noticed how Diaz's aesthetics has changed after a two-year hiatus in

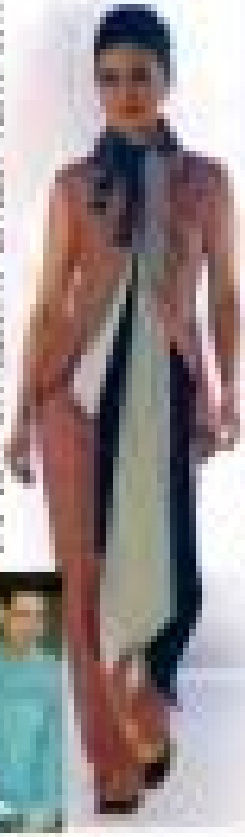
Ad Avails on

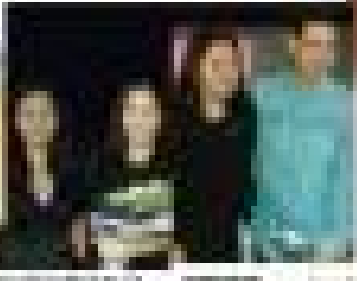
CORDERO'S long and short dresses evoke elegance and Old World glamour for avant-garde and sophisticated clientele.

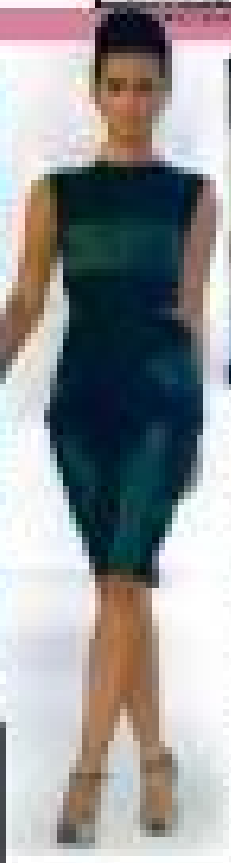
All four captivate

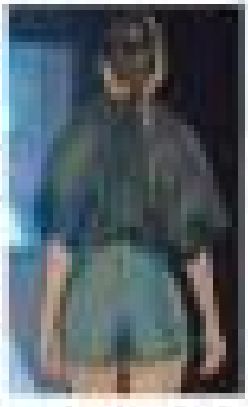












Samsung full HD 3D LED TV and many firsts

Summer Summer!

More terrific reasons to enjoy summer at SM Supermalls!

summer in the islands

Baila Baila
You can't help but sway to the irresistibly infectious beat!

April 24 SM Center Muntinlupa
April 25 SM City Bicutan
SM Southmall
SM City Clark

Latin Groove
Start grooving the Latino way!

Every Fridays & Sundays SM City Clark
April 24 SM City Sucat
SM Center Muntinlupa
SM City Bacolod
April 25 SM City Bicutan
SM City Iloilo

DrumBeats of Brazil
There's no escaping the hypnotic call of these percussive beats!

April 23 SM City Baguio
April 24 SM City Sucat
SM Center Molino
April 25 SM City Bicutan
SM City Lipa
April 26 SM City Bacoor

Viva Capoeira
Be captivated with the riveting performance of disciplined artists.

April 23 SM City Baguio
April 24 SM City Lipa
April 25 SM City Baliwag
SM City Bacolod

Poi
Thrill to the enviable skill and agility of the Poi artists.

April 23 SM City Baguio
SM City Batangas
April 24 SM City Manila

Billboard Latino 2010
Update your music library with the hottest on the chart!

Every Saturdays SM City Clark
April 25 SM Southmall

summer fun

Ben 10 Alien Force Meet & Greet
Get up-close with the hottest Cartoon Network Character to invade SM Supermalls

April 24 SM City Sta. Rosa
April 25 SM City Pampanga

Summer Fashion Show
Catch the parade of the latest summer styles! In partnership with SM Department Store.

April 24 SM Megamall

summer sports

Kite Koopshow
April 27 to May 2 SM City Marilao

Soccer Fiesta
May 1 & 2 SM City North Edsa

summer interlude

Enjoy fun family time at the SM Bowling Centers and cool down with yummy treats at the SM Foodcourt

SM SUPERMALLS

LIFESTYLE *Fashion&Beauty*

Camella is giving you a piece of a premium condo in Davao

Come and join us on our Grand Buyer's Day. Get discounts and flexible payment terms on the following dates:
April 23, General Santos City
April 24, Topping Off ceremony at Camella Northpoint (LR Laurel, Davao City)
Own a Camella Unit for as low as P 17,878/ month.

Camella
A Place Called Home

Manila FAME honors Budji Layug, Ben Farrales

MANILA FAME INTERNATIONAL, Asia's boutique show, recognizes two Philippine design masters in "Icons," a special show focusing on the works of Antonio "Budji" Layug and Benjamin "Ben" Farrales, on April 22-25.

Antonio "Budji" Layug, has always been an advocate of local materials and traditions, designing handbags and gowns that subscribe to that philosophy of design.

Pioneering the concept of tropical modern, his revolutionary Abaci Bamboo Collection buys (bamboo) to become department store staple in Bloomingdale's, Harrod's, and Lord and Taylor—the first Filipino to have achieved such. Through the years, he has established international presence with showrooms in the United States, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

As co-founder of Movement 6, an alliance of celebrated Filipino furniture designers, Layug was able to create a brand that has successfully represented the country to the international design scene and is clearing the direction of Philippine design in the world market.

A third-degree Layug has evolved into a space planner and designer, partnering with architect Royal Pineda. In designing spaces, he looks at how furniture, interior design and architecture blend and complement each other to create a cohesive whole.

A living legend in the Philippine fashion industry, Benjamin "Ben" Farrales has been transforming indigenous materials into stunning multifaceted creations for more than half a century now.

What comes to mind at the mention of his name are his Muslim-inspired creations that have indigenous materials such as tribal elements, lending ordinary fabrications clothing into extraordinary pieces. He has brought his signature design to many countries to various continents through fashion shows and exhibitions.

Proudly journeying Filipino fashion abroad, he continues have been showcased in prestigious venues such as the Palacio Real in Madrid, Galleries Lafayette in Paris, as well as in Italy and Hong Kong, and holds the honor of being the only Filipino to date to produce a well-received fashion show at Washington DC's Kennedy Center.

The dean of Philippine fashion is a title rightly earned by Farrales for his many contributions to the fashion industry and to society.

The recognition he has received for his works include: Hall of Fame award from the Fashion Designers' Association of the Philippines, Philippine Diamond Reel Gems, People's Roll for Haute Couture and the highly coveted The Outstanding Filipino (TOdF) award for fashion in 2003 given by Insular Life Assurance Co., Ltd. and the Philippine Jaycee Senate.

BUDJI Layug and Ben Farrales (right)

Filipina designers in Bravo Filipino

TONIGHT, BRAVO FILIPINO celebrates Filipino fashion designers at Greenbelt 5 with a special group fashion show. Among the designers is an established one who was key in creating a true-ready to wear industry over 30 years ago in the Philippines and pioneered Philippine silk here and for the high-end international market.

True to her roots, Silk Cocoon's Jean Goulbourne has always been and always will be a proud Filipina. In her many years as a fashion designer she has persisted to keep providing her client has locally-loom fabrics to finished products.

With enthusiasm and energy she has the penchant for going for a challenge, coming up with innovative pioneering ideas, having started from the seeds of fashion to the world of intuition with "proudly Filipino" handwoven silk.

Silk Cocoon's latest collection is a clear reflection of what Goulbourne sees and what she supports. Her ensemble, chic and classic pieces show off elegant cutouts underscored in a mix of silk, jute and gauze.

The clothes come in structured tops and draped skirts with embroidery accents in halter dress, shaped blouses, structured tea coat, appliqued bustier dress. They are mixed-softened and hemmed-sheer-toned juxtapositions of the drawing and tuxedo looks in shades of ivory paired with contrasting gun-metal grey.

Silk Cocoon is at G/F New World Hotel, Makati, tel. 811-0056.

Chills and comfort-chic Joel Mesina

SPORTS SHOES SALE

UP TO 50% OFF

great choices

Now thru April 30

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A-LUPIN — By Jess Abrera

PUGAD BARIOT — By Rhy Lianzon

DICK TRACY

LOKOMOKOTS — By Elizabeth Chongco

JAMES BOND

DIVINE COMEDY — By Steven Paulinas

BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

TULOKSI — By Hana Coll

MEH — By Daniel Shelton

KISO MACHINE — By Hanz Abrera

SHERMAN'S LAGOON — By Jim Toomey

HOROSCOPE

By Francis Chaz

ARIES (March 21–April 19). This is a windy day with many wet flies, earwigs and caterpillars. Sudden opportunities might present themselves for you nevertheless, you might win taxes at the bank, or some thing could be complimentary. Caution!

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). You feel excited, restless and eager for something different today. An unidentified flying spirit falls into your hands or lap. However you might misunderstand the wishes of bosses, parents, teachers and CEOs. Be very aware of what you're doing.

GEMINI (May 21–June 20). Work without the screen could be quite profitable for you today. You might be very pleased with yourself. Nevertheless, double-check everything because something might not be right.

CANCER (June 21–July 22). It's not likely to rain new friends and new contacts through private letter. These people are unusual or different, which makes them intriguing to you! Nevertheless, keep your mind open. And to bed.

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22). A romance with your boss or someone older, which is rather could begin today. Nevertheless, you might get into trouble by commenting on something or a dishonest day. Be careful.

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22). Sudden opportunities to travel and further education might present themselves. Please double-check your facts. There could be a mistake somewhere.

LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22). Others want to give you something today or to share for you today. This is good. Nevertheless, if you think it's too good to be true, it might be! Caution.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21). Conversations with partners and close friends are well misunderstandings. Someone might underline you in some way. My advice: If you think something that is going on, it is.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21). Confusion at work with bosses and co-workers! Somebody might misunderstand you. Nevertheless, you might win something. Outright deals are possible!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 20). This is a classic day for love at first sight. The trouble is that love at first sight is that it's rather similar to love at third. Keep your eyes open!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21–Feb. 19). An early contact with old friends starts today. Family discussions might yield a few surprises. However, if you have doubts, do not ignore them.

PISCES (Feb. 20–March 20). Exciting new projects, dance nights start today. Nevertheless, don't fall for things just because they're new and different. Trust your gut instincts.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com.

Concepts Sudoku

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4 3	7	
6	1 2	3
6	3	7 1
4 9	8	5
9	8 6	4
	3	2 1
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Medium ★★★★

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Fab and colorful one-piece swimsuits

MAKE A SPLASH AND STAND OUT IN stylish one-piece swimsuits from Surplus this summer.

Mix and Ryan-flattering, these swimsuits capture summer's exuberance in bitsize and palm prints, as well as its sheer sophistication in geometric and retro designs. At only P399.75 each, these swimsuits are most summer division.

And while you're on the beach, give yourself some sun protection in great style with fun visors and caps from Surplus. Available in red, orange, yellow, green and blue. Some are a great way to accessorize.

SM Advantage cardholders can get that great fun in the sun look and get a chance to buy a colorful towel when they shop by redeeming and other summer stuff from Surplus until May 31.

The swimwear collection is available at Surplus stores at SM Supermalls, including the brand new store on the 2/F SM Bicutan Building A.

GREEN and blue one-piece swimsuit with a tropical print, and black and white asymmetrical neckline one-piece swimsuit (above)

New German products for shiny, healthy hair

DESPITE POAMING YOUR HAIR WITH A gooey concoction made mostly of ash and animal fat, and dousing the stinging solution that your head was going to be for the next few days. If you were born a hundred years ago, you wouldn't mind much imagining because this would've been your lot.

German Hans Schwarzkopf did his share to make hair washing the enjoyable ritual that it is today.

The year is 1898 and in Berlin, German chemist Hans Schwarzkopf has just opened a small drugstore—The Dye, Soap and Perfumery Outlet. He sells his chemical concoctions from this store, and uses it as a venue to market test his inventions. One day in 1903, he introduces his customers to the world's first powdered shampoo ("Shampoo with the Black Head").

Not surprisingly, the new product is enthusiastically received not only by other chemists in Berlin who also want to offer this product to their own customers, but in international markets like Russia and the Netherlands. Thus began the revolutionary brand that was to be known as Schwarzkopf.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Schwarzkopf continued to watch and listen to the changing times and used his observations to spur his new creations. In the 1920s, women started to express their fondness and individuality. Schwarzkopf was listening to the trend and in 1927, introduced the world's first liquid shampoo.

This product promised a woman shiny, healthy hair that would be her true crowning glory. A year later, he launched the first hair conditioner. Schwarzkopf Shanghai. Six years later, the first alkali-free shampoo called Ondulé was made available. Its cutting-edge was Ondulé that it has remained the prototype for all shampoos, even to this day.

As the years went by, Schwarzkopf continued to respond to changing times and to old norms by introducing products to nurture every hair concern. Starting in the 40s, it has continued to set market trends with the most controversy product launches.

- **Ondulette** (1947)—the world's first ever cold wave perm that allowed hair to hold a perm without going through extreme heating.
- **Schwarzkopf Créme Schampon**—the first ever créme shampoo in a tube, a product that paved the way for the mass marketing of shampoos in tubes.
- **Taft**—The liquid hair set (1950s), spawned the expression "Telling," which means using hair spray.
- **Lyxor Royal**—An excellent hair colorist (1960s), became one of the most important hair care products of the 50s.
- **Lyxor Toning** (1970s)—the hair coloring and toning, completely simplified the hair coloring process.
- **Schwarzkopf Taft Hairspray** (1980s)—The first completely CFC-purged, hair lives product in the market.
- **Lyxor Botanic** (1990s)—First found semi-permanent hair colors that are free from pesticides, herbicides and fungicides.
- **Brilliance** (1990s)—Schwarzkopf's crème-mild cream product and the world's first self-regenerating toner for greying hair through a revolutionary formula that reacts with oxygen in the air and renews grey hair to its natural color.

It's no big surprise then that Schwarzkopf continues to thrive as a brand despite being around for the past 112 years—at least for us consumers. But, on top of its longevity, it's also created relevant to the times...and that's a bigger accomplishment.

Schwarzkopf is a leader and an innovator mainly because it manages to read the times well and respond to the ebb and flow of history with agility and imagination. And those Schwarzkopf's legacy is not only in the fact that he revolutionized our bath time, but in also in the spirit of timeliness and fearlessness that he breathed into the Schwarzkopf company.

PAWS Aspin Club to be launched tomorrow

'Dalaw ni San Miguel' to visit parishes

Campaign against counterfeit sandals

LIFESTYLE Fashion&Beauty

Lily-white skin now possible

THE SEA lily doesn't wilt or leave under the hot sun. Clarins scientists mimic its botanical makeup.

Clarins' new White Plus HP Sea Lily Enriched mimics the perpetual pristine state of the sea lily on human skin

SKIN-whitening or Clarins means having secrets-skincare that glows, not skin that's simply white: which makes space and skincare more visible.

By Cleche V. Moral

IT'S NO ACCIDENT THAT PURITY on a person's most virtuous route is compared to the lily. One particular species' botanical radiance, for sure, is now being used by a prestigious French cosmetics firm as its new whitening range in the hopes of mimicking its perpetual pristine state on human complexion.

The sea lily, originally found in southern Asia, but is now found in abundance on the coast of Brittany in France, is the basis of Clarins' new White Plus HP Sea Lily Enriched, a six-product line that's the improved version of the company's White Plus range first introduced in 2007. According to Janice Ito, Inquirer regional writer of Clarins in Asia, the process is called biomimetism.

The sea lily, Ito said, grows in the same area where the sun is at its hottest. Its flowers, however, miraculously don't wilt or burn in the heat but, in fact, blooms immaculately white. Clarins scientists have found that the sea lily has a molecule in its petal that disposes the polar equivalent of UVA and UVB. It also has unique roots that entwine and cling to the soil, making it vulnerable resistant to the elements.

"Since you were there [with] Alex [others] by the roadside Bagbaguin?" Ito asked. "Those are other same family."

In 2007, the first White Plus line focused simply on minimizing the dispersion of melanocytes or pigment cells. (When skin is put under stress, say overexposed to the sun, melanocytes extend their arms, like an octopus, causing it dispersed melanin, making the skin's surface dark.)

(CONTINUED ON F2)

Spotlight on Ruffa with Nokia's Ovi Maps.

As her assistants frantically primp and prime - Ruffa Gutierrez stands cool and collected amidst a kind of photo shoot hustle and bustle reserved for stars of the highest order.

The wayward cut turned and the superstar flawless, the shoot begins. With photographer Xander Angeles orchestrating the proceedings and stylist Pam Quiñones looking on, Ruffa knocks it out of the park, as poets and always in her element.

Supertize, moderate and ever gracious hostess—and it's not even lunch yet. Welcome to Ruffa Gutierrez's fast-paced, ever-moving, ever-glamorous life. "I'm a multi-tasker," she explains. "I do everything at the same time."

At any given point in a day's work, Ruffa will be preparing for a shoot, on the phone, memorizing a script, and checking up on her kids on top of that. "I do have a very hectic life," she says. "I get so bored when I'm just sitting here not doing anything. I feel that there's so much to do and so little time. Before you know it, it's already night time and you're ready to go to bed."

"With Ovi Maps' Share Location feature, Ruffa can have an even better connection to the people who matter to her the most."

She's always on the go, shuttling from shoots to the studio to events. To keep in touch with the people closest to her, she uses the best devices technology can offer. "My brother Raphael Gutierrez] and I are in Kiss Twitter. We also have Facebook and I have a Facebook fan page, too."

This makes her the ideal endorser for Nokia's Ovi Maps. Though she isn't really a techie, Ruffa has taken advantage of modern technology to connect with friends, family and even her fans. With Ovi Maps' Share Location feature, she'd likely be able to have an even better connection to the people who matter to her the most.

Ovi Maps allows Ruffa to share the exact location and address of any place she's at, the moment she posts her status, post, photo or Facebook. "I really love it," she says. "I think it's the coolest."

She too can share your location on Facebook. Just follow these easy steps:

1. Add the Share Location Widget on your Home Screen.
With the Share Location widget on your device home screen, you can quickly add your location.

2. Update your location. Ovi Maps updates your location using GPS. This allows you to share the exact street address of your latest place of entry or that nightspot. Just choose Share Location / Place.

3. Post your status. Tell the world about the killer heels you just bought or the beautiful architecture you just saw.

4. Attach a photo. They say a picture paints a thousand words. When you're bound by the limitations of status messages, a photo can finish off the job for these words you can't get. You can choose between taking a new picture or choosing one from your photo gallery.

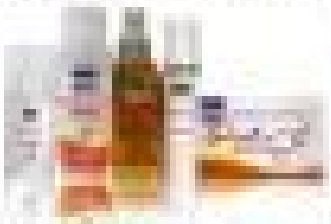
You've just shared with your friends where you are and what you're doing! Check out your Facebook profile and your friends' comments now.

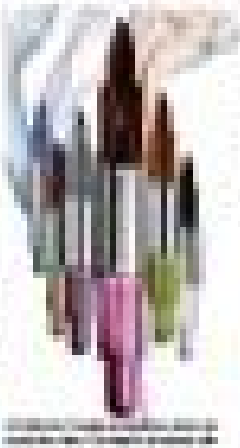
For Ruffa Gutierrez, no shoot, out-of-the-country trip, or business whatsoever should get in the way of connecting with the people who matter. "Communication's key with any relationship you have—with friends, family, kids," she says.

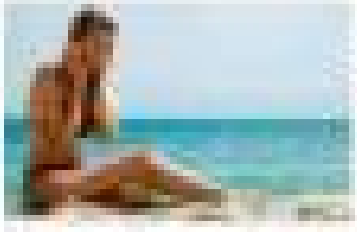
To download Ovi Maps to your Nokia device, go to www.nokia.com.ph/maps

Share your location with Ruffa Gutierrez on Facebook using Ovi Maps and get a chance to win a brand new Nokia device! Visit www.nokia.com.ph/ruffag for more details.

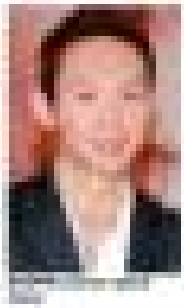
Lip gloss with diamond-like shine



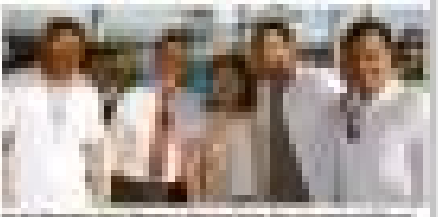


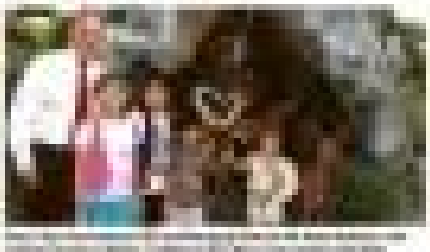


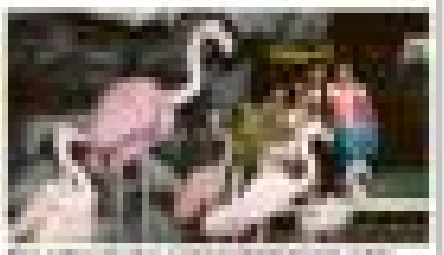
Lily-white skin now possible



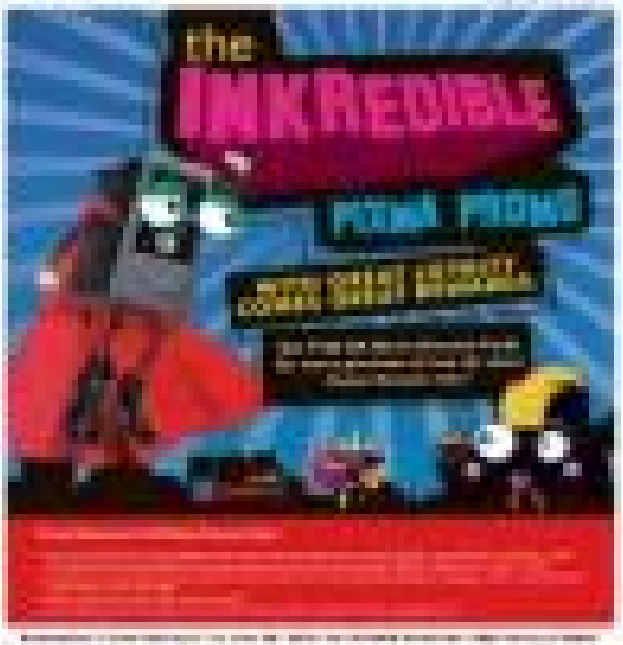
A SKYGARDEN SAFARI AT SM CITY NORTH EDSA







How to treat dark spots and skin discoloration



MONGOL Advocacy Ambassadors Inspire Kids To Dream

MAURICE Arnaiz (r) is joined by his beloved birthday celebrant (and perfect hostess Nedy Tantoco

ARKITEKS celebrities: architect Alex Yan Hagan, with Nedy's close pal Bobi Crook and Ambassador Lani Barnardo

TATLER publisher and Harrison Plaza's Irene Marcos Francisco

Nedy Tantoco hosts fun dinner for her three friends

BULGARI and Harrison Plaza Bangkok reps Conchona Sevilla Bernardo

IT'S NO SECRET AT ALL, SABLEHOS, that mega Tantocos and the brilliant Ignacio Soliled Sison Specialist Inc., Bautista Marketing Specialist Inc., Human Commercial Corp. and Blanket Specialty Concept Inc., adorable Nedy Tantoco really knows how to throw a great, fun bash.

Her much-revered invitations among the well-heeled set, high-end Filipino circle and diplomat corps are highly prized, pedigree, because her guests are assured of excellently prepared gourmet food and perfect wine.

A couple of days ago, Nedy hosted dinner for me, it was a birthday celebration held on the night of our dinner for Peninsula Manila's popular and good-looking GM Jonathon Crook and Nedy's close pal, our photographer Alex Yan Hagan. The celebration was held at that world-class restaurant Illustrado on Salcedo Street, Salcedo Village, Makati. The room has a simple Intramuros feel, outside which is simply elegant and tasteful. It was dreamily brilliant young interior designer Maja Olivares Co, to him.

Once the starters were complete, we sat down for a to-die-for gastronomic treat by the young white and talented chef Stephanie Tambunting.

It was to awesome to assess menu, which included Portobello mushrooms, baked egg, goat cheese ravioli, olive butter, crab and mustard potatoes, lamb rack and sausage, croutons with French beans and roasted veal chops, plus foie gras, calamansi dessert, dulcinea.

The same crowd from the venue's superb wine cellar had us going gaga, to this end, before I had introvert this Dantesa Damore. I just don't feel like drinking anything else."

It was totally a great night of the right ambiance, excellent food and true pals, pedigrees. The event was the best rationale for the perfect night of togetherness, with our glorious hostess, our pal Nedy Tantoco, darlings.

CHIC salaritines

EYE-CATCHING Ivan Mulle Torres in her cool Mango outfit

GORGEOUS TV star and model Pinamela Baricuatro

Mango-RCBC promo

When two hot names meet face-to-face, you can be sure it's going to be a totally roaring successful encounter, pedigree. And don't exactly what happened when I dashed into the Atrium, Eastwood Mall, to witness the Mango-RCBC Dashkard Master-Card, currently issued by Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) through its Dashkard, Inc. That was a formal launch for Mango's cool, colorful and comfy spring and summer collection, darlings.

HOSTESS with the mostest chef Stephanie Tambunting, Maria Bueno, Mia Borromeo and popular cardiologist Randy Francisco

BIRTHDAY celebrator and Peninsula GM Jonathon Crook

REMEMBRED Israeli pianist Tamir Kalifasz

TALENTED Palestinian pianist Haroune Bshara

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH Haweiee Arcache shows to Alex Yan Hagan using YSL Pinki Solutions

The product, I was told, is a partnership between RCBC Dashkard and the retail Genesis Mango clothing company which started in 1984, and has evolved into, would you believe, one of the leaders in European retail sales, based in Barcelona, Spain. As of today they have over 1,200 awesome stores. Recently, it celebrated its 10th anniversary with the opening of two stores in our town, pedigree.

Like all RCBC Dashkard cards, the Mango-RCBC Dashkard MasterCard has a rewards program that allows cardholders to earn rewards points like getting zero-percent interest for an installment of three to six months at all Mango stores or exchange for more items, darlings. Not bad, 'di baba?

St. Patrick's Day

The night was an elegant cocktail reception celebrating the National Day of Ireland, universally known as St. Patrick's Day, darlings. The event was hosted by the Irish

MANGO country manager Michael Corsaro, CEO/ president of RCBC and Dashkard Oscar Bunoan and Mango Phils. operations director Rosa Maria Guadiamos

FR. JIMI O'Donoghue

WILLIAM Nolan, Hilde Dolan and Ana Valentino

BIA HAZ Hazel Yao, Earl Yap, Victor Gozar and Michael Casaro

VICE Consul Robert Trota and wife Rita Trota with Consul Oscar de Veyrac

DEAN of Diplomatic Corps Edvard Joseph Antaru, Foreign Affairs Undersecretaries Erlinda Basilio, Irish Consul Gen. Norma Trota and popular Irish Ambassador Richard O'Brien

Fiesta Filipina

DAZZLE Jean Lopez and Tatler editor-in-chief Annie San Diego

JOY WITH in-demand interior designer and Museo co-owner Maja Olivares Co

Comedians in Manila. Traditional Irish music resonated in the Rizal Ballroom of Makati Shangri-La Manila as well respected Irish Ambassador, Mr. Richard O'Brien received the 300 namesdropable dignitaries and guests at the ballroom of Shangri-La Makati, while the upbeat Irish music played at the background.

For exciting cocktail tables adorned with flowers plus the Irish tricolor gold, white and green were spread out through the ballroom, palangges, was the perfect ambiance that went with traditional Irish and a dash of international delight.

After dinner the ambassador greeted the guests in Irish, you would say, before Department of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Erlinda Basilio mentioned in her short speech the "strong relationship between Ireland and the Philippines."

Greeting the invitees were the Dean of Diplomatic Corps Ambassador Edward Joseph Antaru, Irish Consul General Norman Trota, Vice Consul Robert Trota, and members of St. Patrick's Society of the Philippines, darlings. To the Irish Consulate in Manila, Slate Griffith Co Carol

Call Brian Estrada at 9186840 or 0915-9902862 or e-mail [illegible] for more info.

Piano concert

Take note, palangges, on April 24, 8 p.m., the Insular Hall in Makati will present Pianissimo, to be performed by two fantastic renowned pianists Tamar Kalifasz, who is Israeli, and Haroune Bshara, a Palestinian. This concert is made possible with the help of Insular Life celebrating 100 years of service, with the president of Filipino Cultural Foundation, Vicky E. Zafaro and the Embassy of Israel's celebrations of its National Day on April 27.

Tickets are priced at P600 for balcony, P800, pits orchestra, and P1,000, orchestra center. There is a 20-percent discount for seniors and season subscribers, and a 50-percent discount for students.

LIVING Stars

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OVERHEARD

More than 'friendsters'

Mike "I Just Love Alonzo" and Jomar Linsko met on the social networking site Friendster three years ago. "Jomar was the best friend of a cousin. I didn't personally know him [but] I accepted his 'friendship' request. I hate myspace people online."

HOME BODY

Cooking up a new home

ROAMER: Sharon, host of QTV's new cooking show, Sa Iyong Kusina[ing] his parents' old home, where she now stays with her two kids. In her small but compact kitchen, she says, the cut cook for up to 30 people, mostly hungry relatives who gather almost every Sunday. "Most of them drive all the way from the South just to eat what I cook," says Sharon[ing]. More on page C4

Father and son

RYAN Figueroa, who recently tied the knot with model Cathy Bordallo, writes: "My dad (actor Michael de Mesa) told me to be grateful to my wife, to be a good husband. He said I'd be a fool to let her go. I was happy that the entire family—including my dad and grandparents (Eddie Mesa and Fontanilla Gil, who flew in from the United States)...witnessed the start of our new life together as a couple." Beyond Star Magic

OVERHEARD

At the Cinemas

Ayala Malls

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April 10-25

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April 24-25

Adventure

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Malls Anniversary

April 23, Active Zone

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Mobile Mega Mobile Connection, April 24, Game Activity Center

BONIFACIO HIGH STREET

Malls Anniversary

April 24

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HEAT

AFTER THE SUN

Ayala Malls

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March 31, 2010 - 9:00pm

North Edsa Entertainment

April 3, 7pm

Amphitheater Main Entry

April 10, 7pm

Amphitheater Main Entry

April 11, 2pm

Dance Performance

April 11 at 11, Lilies at 3pm

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April 11, 2pm

Dance Performance

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KATRINA HALILI

BARBIE is a Persian cat. She's a year old. Kinamo ko rin eh! She likes to cuddle on my favorite pair of slippers. Ang mahal pa naman nun. Now all its (innocent) crystals are gone. Also likes walking around. Do rounds and lying on my bed. I have dogs, too, but I don't have time for them anymore because of my busy schedule. Sadly, I had to bring them to Palawan, my home town.

Married K. Cruz

'KC's Closet' vs child hunger

ACTRESS-TV HOST KC CONCEPCION, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) ambassador, has launched an online charity auction, "KC's Closet," to help Fund the campaign against child hunger.

STARS FOR OTHERS

The item doing my Artist's list for the straight years now [many] list year because of Typhoon "Ondoy." If, said Living Stars. And unlike in previous years when she set up houses, KC said, now she's putting everything online through www.stellajoyce.ph.

"On sale every week will be 24 items—my purses, shoes and bags, plus one item from another celebrity," she said.

The items can also be seen on sites like www.wfp.org and www.stellajoyce.ph. Another online auction is being arranged in time for Christmas, said KC.

Married K. Cruz

PRINCESS VIOLAGO

"THE 48 LAWS OF POWER" BY ROBERT Greene is a tool that can help anyone become a leader. To be a good leader or, in my case, a successful businessperson, you should know other people as well as yourself. I recently took up Psychology at the UP Open University and realized that people's attitudes, behavior and ways of thinking fascinate me. In the book, I learned that you should remain humble. Flaunting your success can cause envy in other people who might start wishing for your downfall. This book has taught me to be simple.

Bayani San Diego Jr.

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ROSEBUD moved here with her two kids in 2009.

HOME BODY

HER BROTHER Ryan, an interior designer, helped her renovate.

THE FUN room where Rosebud and the kids watch TV and play games

Celeb chef cooks up new home look

Rosebud Benitez, host of 'Quickfire,' doesn't like TV sets in the bedroom

By Marisol R. Cruz
Photos by Jim Cuison Punsalan

CHEF ROSEBUD Benitez, host of QTV 11's "Quickfire," said she once considered turning the kitchen of her 400-square meter Quezon City home into a cooking school.

"I later decided against it. Renovating the kitchen was too tedious. I had to look over so many blueprints. I was also worried about my family's privacy," Rosebud told Living Stars.

These days, Rosebud still gives cooking lessons in the house, but only for a maximum of four students. "Mostly friends of friends," the celeb chef said. "The lessons aren't regular, either. They depend on my schedule."

Rosebud shares the two-story residence with her kids Katrina, 16, and Kyle, 13. "I grew up here. While my mom went to live abroad, we had this rented out," she said. "From our house in the Manila, we moved back here in June 2009. It's closer to Antonio's where my daughter studies."

POCKET garden in the living area

UPRIGHT piano has been with the family for quite some time. Rosebud's daughter enjoys playing it.

A FEW pieces from Rosebud's uncle Andres' antique and cocktails collection

Old features

Rosebud is renovating portions of the house, but is retaining some old features, like the mini-bar and pocket garden in the living area. "I just had the walls and cupboards at the mini-bar repainted," she said.

The upright piano has been with the family for quite some time. Katrina, Rosebud said, is the "most musically inclined" in the family.

The unicorn with an elaborate wooden frame, and the china cabinet in the dining area, have also been there since Rosebud was 7. "They go well with the house's overall look," said the chef.

Rosebud credits her uncle Andres, a collector of antiques and crystals, and her brother Ryan, an interior designer, for her Asian-theme home. "Some of the pieces are actually from my uncle's collection. The others I bought from Bangkok," she said. "My brother helped pick out new paintings. The old ones were so modernistic. He upgraded the look."

DECORATIVE mugs and pitcher from trips abroad

WOODEN console that dates back to Rosebud was 7.

Hangout

In Rosebud's small yet compact kitchen, she can cook for up to 10 people. "My relatives are here almost every fiesta day. Most of them drive all the way from the South just to eat what I cook. Driving may pain[illegible]," Rosebud explained. After the interview, the chef whipped up a mean dish of pasta with prawns in olive oil. "I call [some dishes] 'shortcuts,' for example, I like to use portions," Rosebud explained.

OLD TELEPHONE bench repurposed as firetruck red

The second-floor receiving area in the house is called the fun room. "The paintings and furniture here are more colorful. This is where we watch TV and play games," she said. What I don't feel like cooking, I order pizza or serve chips to the kids and our guests."

Rosebud's bedroom used to be her parents'. "When we moved in, I had everything fixed, from the flooring to the walls," she said. "And I'm not done with it just yet."

Just for fun

She is seriously against putting TV sets in any of the three bedrooms upstairs. "The TV is supposed to be just in the fun room, but my daughter is lobbying for one," Rosebud said. "I feel like, if I buy more TV sets, we won't see each other anymore. I noticed that when all three of us are using our laptops, we just talk using Yahoo Messenger."

marisol@inquirer.com.ph

BIG SEAT dining table is one of the oldest pieces in the house.

HOME theater and colorful paintings in the fun room

SHE HAS cooked for as many as 20 people in the small-sized kitchen.

ENTERTAINMENT

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Liezl's okay

ACTOR AUBREY MIAWANG ON HIS WIFE Liezl's battle with breast cancer:

"Everything is looking good, based on the latest tests. We thank God for that. Still, she goes to regular checkups, just to be sure. Pero as we speak, it's a clean slate."

Married 18 Uhm

OVERHEARD

Happy to be a Binibining Pilipinas reject

By Aurora Adina

MISS PHILIPPINES EARTH 2009 hurts but holds sympathies with Maria Venus Raj, the embattled beauty queen whose Binibining Pilipinas Universe crown still hangs in the balance.

"I can relate 100 percent to what she is going through," said Stalbol, a Filipino-German model and morning goodness. "I wish [Venus' case] had been handled another way."

Last year, runner-up Binibining Pilipinas Charities Inc. (BPCI) had disqualified Stalbol from the competition one days before pageant night in March, due to her photos that appeared in a men's magazine in 2007.

Venus was stripped of her title last month due to alleged misrepresentation—specifically, inconsistencies in her official

MORE P2

Patti Austin sings for Bantay Bata

LOS ANGELES—"IS THAT CHAMPAGNE?" Patti Austin asked about the toothpaste running around the rehearsal studio. "Why is the wearing slippers?"

Silly chuckles!...were the Grammy-winning R&B/jazz singer knows the name of the frisky dog with curly coat. She even pronounced the canine's name correctly and in that famous rasp Patti had just avowed to practice a set for her "Heart and Soul" concert with Lea Salonga in this universal space in North Hollywood.

Queensway belongs to Mimi Yow, a Filipino artist's lover. Patti's makeup artist and friend for several years now. The dog and her equally flamboyant master drove up the online dash cams. We wouldn't be surprised if Mimi, who is really Antonio Goito Mandez from Luzena, Quezon, told me that Bert was Chaweyen's godmother.

There singers Annie Nepomuceno, Gelo Francisco and Sharon Wade arrived in time to practice their backup vocals with Patti, who first sang in the Apollo Theater as age 4 and had a record contract at 5 years old.

First encounter

David Tapia, the Hoyy who has been making some of Patti's set target greens, also turned up to go over the chorus he was making the last concert which hosted to Las Vegas on April 17 and will be staged next April 30 at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills. Tapia's guests for the latest show are Lilybee Edmonson.

Barry Gray, Patti's manager, told me that the musicians taking their positions in the studio comprised Lea's band in the United States, while Greg Phillinganes, well-regarded session musician (worked with Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Eric Clapton, to name a few), was brought in by Patti.

Fil-Am Pam Gotladera and Rosie Chua are producing the LA show with Vic Reyes and Sonia Dalusa of Queen Light Entertainment Enterprise (QLEE) as promoters. Jubin Negala's RAD Entertainment co-produced the Vegas concert.

After greeting thriller hiccs and being introduced to new ones, Patti dragged her last word from the scenic spot in the room and sat behind her backup vocalists, accomplished choir and band singers to their own right. As the musicians rehearsed with Greg on key,

PATTI S4

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rahwin Y. Sepulveda

This biz of buzzing

By Boyet Sin Diego Jr.

WHAT ELSE COULD BE accomplished with the show biz talk show format that hasn't been done by ABS-CBN's "The Buzz" or GMA 7's "Star Talk" and "Showbiz Central"?

A lot more, says "Paparazzi" director Gil Santpedro.

Star vs TV5's goal of luring the local broadcast industry's "third force," its new Sunday afternoon gab fest, "Paparazzi" is trying to set us some sort of equilibrium.

Santpedro explains, ever so diplomatically: "Each show has its strengths, but one clear advantage we have is stable news coverage."

"Paparazzi" director vows to report everything and protect no one

As "Paparazzi" hosts Rolla Gutierrez, Cristy Fermin and Dolly Anne Carvajal-Soreo are set to premiere, they can feature ice critique, with equal intensity, stars of both ABS-CBN and GMA 7.

"I can't say that we are the better show, but we try to be differ-

SHOW 02

"PAPARAZZI" hosts Cristy Fermin, Rolla Gutierrez, Dolly Anne Carvajal-Soreo (at center-chairs)

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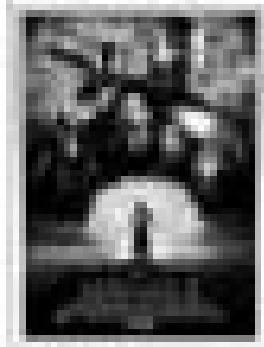

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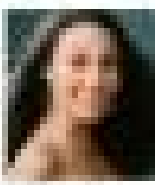

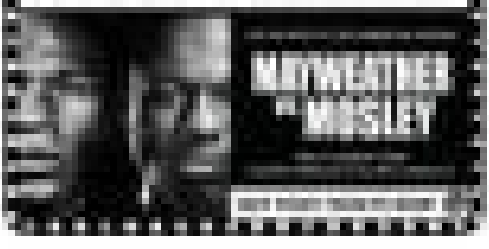

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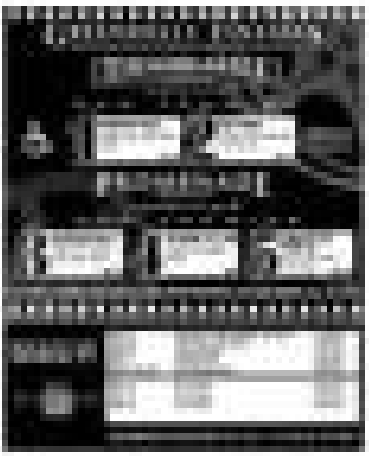

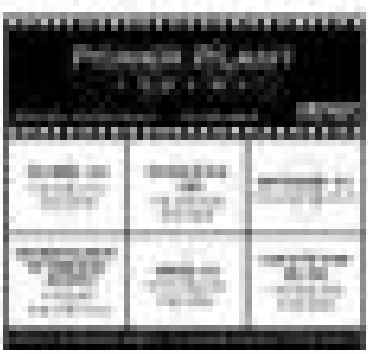

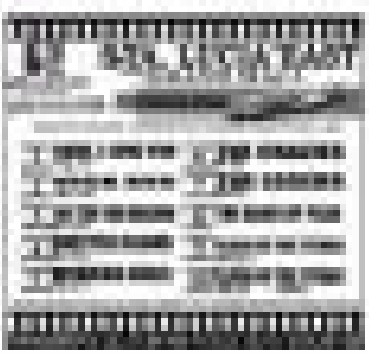

CALLALILY

20 bands, solo acts in 'Earth Day Jam'; Willie, Jon repeats

SOME 20 BANDS AND SOLO ACTS LED BY The Dawn, Sexybeinnit, Callalily, Up Dharma Down, Imago, Urbandub, Soul Cabangpi, Lou Bonanovo, among others, perform in "Earth Day Jam" tonight, starting 6 p.m. at the Tomas Morato Ave. strip in Quezon City.

Extended

Jon Santos' "Bet Water or Bet Worse" has been extended since April 20, Fuweyplast Cinema 2, Nodcor®, and May 4, Sunday at Promenade, Greenhills. Filipe Ong's "Pecolamidor for Toilet" repeats tonight and on April 30 at the Blade Museum in Greenhills.

SHOW TIME

'MADZ Et Al Festival'

Some 46 choirs from various regions of the country will perform in "MADZ Et Al festival," the annual music event which features groups trained and conducted by regular members and alumni of the Philippine Madrigal Singers. This year's festival, which will also feature jazz music, will be held from May 21 to 8 at the Phil. arts Lib. Theater, Ort Ave. Manila. All shows start at 7 p.m.

'Rock for Change' at MOA

"Rock for Change," a concert advocating social involvement in the worship cultural elements, will be held on May 1, 8 p.m. at the SM Mall of Asia Penthouse 600 Level, North Parking Building). Performing are Nina Glasco, Sandwich, Urbandub, The Jimm, Imago, Mother Highway Parabonan, Gee Dimle, among others.

Patti Austin sings for Bantay Bata

From page 6

Recently, Patti—the acclaimed singer behind the hits "Baby Come to Me" and "How Do You Keep the Music Playing?"—went over the backup vocals with Annie, Gela and Sharon.

A few days later, we interviewed via e-mail these Filipino talents who are collaborating with the highly accomplished performer.

Most surprised by her encounter with Patti: "First years ago, I was working on Bet Bedward's 'Celebrity Duets,' where I did the makeup of Deniece Williams. A woman came walking in, I'm bored!—no makeup, hair not done. I asked Deniece who the woman was, and it turned out to be Patti Austin. We were introduced. I admired Patti's powerful personality right away like seasoned talking about how she and Deniece were roommates back in the '80s."

Music fans surprised how Patti was natural here, asking if he would do her makeup. "It told her that, as a courtesy I needed to ask Deniece's permission first. Deniece exclaimed, 'Yes!' and told me how much she loved Patti as a friend. Patti asked me if I could do her makeup again on the second show for the General Records. That's how I started 'working with the diva.'"

Hysterically funny

To this day we will play March 1993 live album, mostly because of her hilarious stories on the "crucial differences" of some singers. Sonic Glen to James Ingram, her partner on the duet, "How Do You..." The album should really have been nominated for the Grammy's Best Comedy Album because Patti's mimicries throughout the concert record and dead-on imitations of those artists are hysterically funny.

So we asked Most, who also does Lea's makeup in her Reina Coast shows, how "Bulay" Patti really was. Most replied, "Oh hey, calma, especially as her hours when we are hooking with her family and friends, including her godfather, Quincy Jones. He likes to talk like a little girl and good natured."

What's an interesting quality of Patti that most people are not aware of? "She is generous," Most said. "She helps a lot of charities, including Bantay Bata. She's always asks me, 'How is your family in the Philippines?' She is cheerful, positive and always lends a helping hand."

The "Heart and Soul" divas are for Bantay Bata in the Philippines and the Nordoon Priesthood Program in LA, an Obama project that Patti endorses.

Comedic talent

Most said Patti also liked to talk about how much the organ performs in the Philippines. "Even her goddaughter, Nia Grace (an actress), wants to live in the Philippines," said Most, who had told us earlier that Patti was fascinating. Lauren, a promising 20-year-old Filipina singer who was like when being managed by Harry.

David also brought up the singer's comedic talents as one of her best qualities. "Patti is one of those artists who have no limit up about her talent or her success," he said. "She adapts easily to a situation and has a terrific sense of humor that makes makeup artists laugh to tears and lose their concentration. She's very down-to-earth."

David also cast between of Patti—down-to-earth—and Gela: "For the 'Tribute to Aretha Franklin,' I made her a silver/grey dress, gown with a draped veil. I 'freaked' her out. She back to that it gave a draped effect. We practiced the walk and all with Earl Jennings Patti, who was her escort.

"Patti told me that, when they arrived at the tribute, as she stepped down from the limo with Barry following her, actual all the cameras clicking, she heard a rip before her dress. Barry stepped on her dress! She said it was like one of those wardrobe malfunction moments. Patti said that the be came like a model goddess the tipped up of the veil and draped it on her arms like it was part of the gown's design. The cameras kept clicking and all. It was a show in itself. We laughed long and hard later that night when Patti told me the story."

Meeting the performer for the first time was memorable for David: "I met Patti (Bet Ward) who completed me over by bringing her to my studio in Pound. [and] Mike Tuddleman). She loved the set and wanted to meet me. She came in and tried on some of the clothes I had and she bought them. Then she started calling and collaborating with me for her red carpet events. I did her Grammy Awards gowns in Jennifer 4th velvet.

PAT'TER: a David Yupoo gown during the Grammys in 2008.

She was the first Jury Word Album for Bette Gershwin."

David added that Dott always leave what she wanted. "She has an individual style that's all her own," he said. "She loves to hug and feel fabrics and shows and closets on event. She remembers on styles but keeps everything classic and appropriate.

I would meet with her and we would start shopping, material over her, like she was a paper doll. We would style her up and feel like we were little playing with events things in her closet."

Annie marveled at how Patti really took the time to rehearse the vocals with her Gela and Sharon. "For it, seasoned vocalist that she is, went to work straight away," Annie said. "Her caught musically knowledgeable, she taught us the vocal parts of her vocal line. She was warm and funny as she worked every detail."

Thrilled as they were to be working with musical director Greg, Annie said "She had to constantly cue Greg and keep up with his instructions. They were given quickly and technically because it was indeed, all in a day's work as expected of working musicians."

Asked how the Mgm show went, Annie replied: "Patti and Lea shows in their own sets, but when they sang the duet 'Sir Good' from 'Wicked,' they performed with forms in unnerworking pitch and vocal command, each in her own style. The vocal exchange was a totally unique interpretation than proved the true musicianship of these talented ladies."

Genius, passion

Gela remarked: "What could top a night of music with two great performers, two music genres and one mission: to help kids in need? I was in the Philippines, not to mention the genius of the musicians and the passion and hard working nature of the people behind the production! I also admire the courage of the producers who took the chance to sponsor such a show in the midst of an unsure economy. The whole show was the highlight!"

What struck him most about Patti, Gela said, was "She is the embodiment of professionalism ... For me, the most humbling aspect of working with her was how she didn't mind 'mentoring' us with vocal tips for each particular song we were doing, making sure that we all got comfortable with her and not feel intimidated. Together with Greg, she made everyone, including the musicians, at ease by cracking jokes. In every though we were in the presence of greatness, we were all relaxed."

A few days later, Most jokingly confessed our assumption: "Patti is Obama's mother's favorite!"

E-mail the columnist at <cinquilet_1000@yahoo.com>

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Eastwood Mall
Open Park

Sinosikat
LIVE!
8:00 PM
Eastwood Central Plaza

Buy a copy of "Sinosikat" the latest album of Sinosikat at the Eastwood Mall Concierge. Information Counter or Venice Plaza concert venue to get VIP seats.

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